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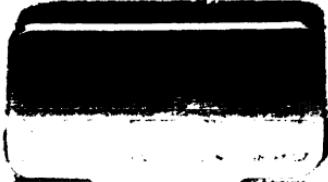
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A JAPANESE GARDEN.



“OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD”

OR

SKETCHES IN THE SUBURBS OF YEDO.

BY

“ T. A. P. ”

—

J. M. J.

YOKOHAMA :
1874.

P R E F A C E .

THESE little sketches, originally published in the “*Japan Weekly Mail*” and here collected together, have been in a measure revised and, indeed, in some instances rewritten. Mere outlines at the best, if, here and there, a touch of shading or a dash of colour can be detected, the author has gratefully to acknowledge the hand of one or other of three friendly artists, to whose kindly help the pictures owe whatever claim they may be found to have to public favour.

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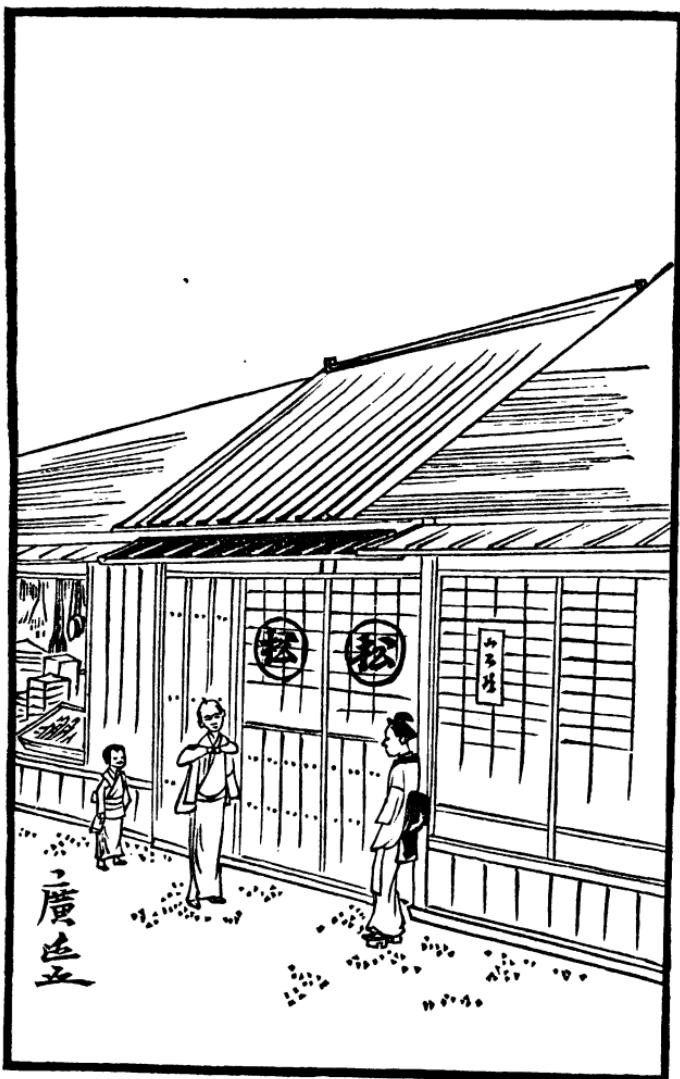
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OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD.

“OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD,” from which these scenes are chiefly taken, is situated in a retired and quiet suburb of the ancient city of Yedo. It is an old-fashioned straggling village, in which the evidences of Western civilization have not displayed themselves as yet, where the simple-minded folks still walk in the footsteps of their fathers, and are content to spend their uneventful lives without a thought of change. Old customs, elsewhere uprooted, or feebly struggling with the vigorous growth of foreign innovation, exist here undisturbed. Nor indeed is the soil a favourable one for innovations, for a more contented lot of old dullards than the villagers it would be difficult to discover out of dreamland. Nay, it hath been averred, that so wedded are we to our simplicity, (ignorance, the fashionable barber who once appeared amongst us, called it), that public opinion is apt to deal hardly with any individual who, ambitious to improve upon the habits of his ancestors, alters so much as the pattern of his coat or the dressing of his hair.

Our village may be said to occupy the neutral ground between the termination of the great city and the commencement of the open country beyond; for, entering it by the town side, the main street has a tolerably compact appearance, which it gradually loses as the traveller pursues his journey westward, the houses becoming fewer and farther between, and fields and gardens increasing in proportion. An air of great antiquity lingers about the place. The houses, built of heavy timbers and for the most part roofed with ponderous tiles, green with the moss of ages, are long since out of perpendicular. They seem to stand at ease, and, as they lean towards one another, look like groups of old and friendly neighbours engaged in grave and quiet conversation. Not that they are all so old and grave-looking either. See that trim little fire-proof storehouse yonder, shining in its black lacquered coat, like a neat young Quakeress in satin. No wonder that the rollicking-looking silk-mercer's house over the way cocked his gabled roof at her in that knowing fashion when she was varnished up last year, and—for all one knows to the contrary—the house at the corner which is falling in two, may have cracked its old sides laughing at the monstrous pretensions of the silk mercer.

Then the barber's shop—a saucy little houselet between two giants—with its screen of bamboo rods, which tinkle musically on sunny days as they strike against one another in the breeze. There's



VILLAGE STREET.

an air of pert confidence about the barber's, which seems to say, "I'm a weak little thing of a house, " it is true, but for all that I'm not a bit afraid of "you big fellows. And, indeed, I don't believe you could get on without me, you old totterers. You'd surely fall together and hurt your old selves if I did not prop you up. I know very well that the huge, crossed beams between you, above my roof, are not protecting arms for little me, as you'd have folks believe, but are meant to keep you both apart; so none of your patronizing airs, good Sirs."

The cake shop, too, is very well in its way, with its bright-looking, many-coloured sweets, temptingly displayed in trays and scrupulously clean. Then there's the *saké* shop. It has an air of business and respectability about it which would not disgrace a side street of the great metropolis itself. The apothecary's likewise must not be forgotten, with its paper windows carefully removed to show the imposing array of little drawers and big bottles ranged around, as well as the busy assistant, who is ever engaged in pounding in an iron mortar, or chopping up roots with an instrument like an old-fashioned cheese knife. But the glory of this establishment is the huge sign that swings without, setting forth to the world an infinite catalogue of drugs against disease and charms against the devil, and presided over by a pair of mighty gilded eyes which confer upon the whole concern an air of

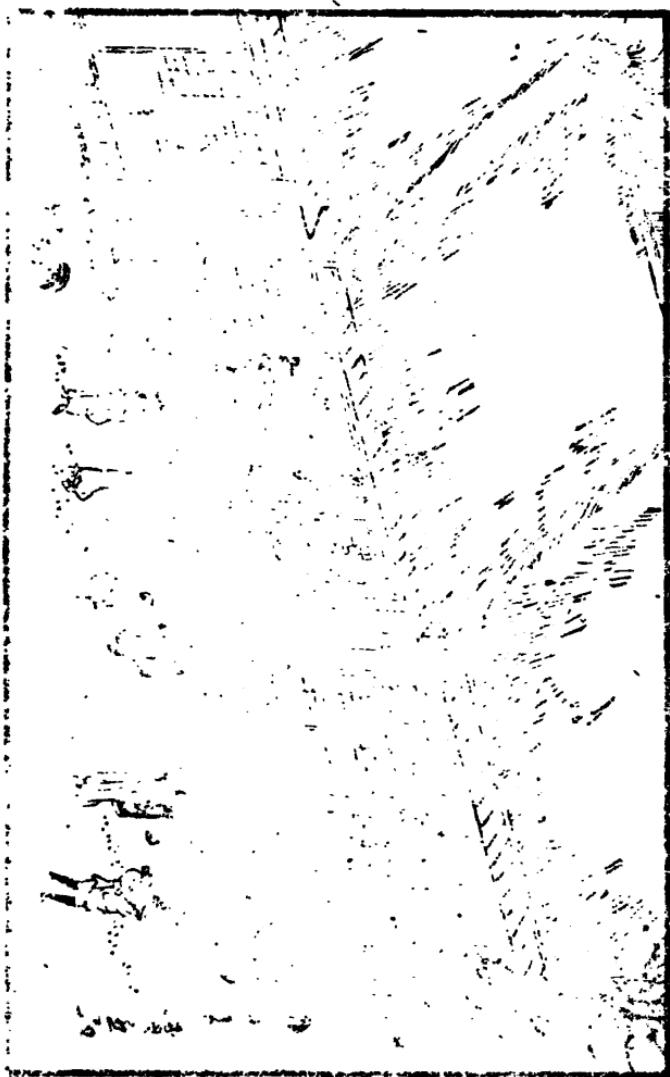
wide-awakedness, and convey, no doubt, much comforting assurance accordingly to the customers whose advent they look down on. It is not without reason therefore that the doctor is wont to aver, that, for the size of it, he does not believe there's a nicer little establishment of the kind in Yedo.

A word must also be said in favour of the tea shop, so neat and orderly, with its rows of glazed earthenware receptacles for teas of many varieties. Upon a back shelf, in full view of the passer-by, may be seen an assortment of teapots, with here and there a metal caddy, tastefully arranged to catch the eye. On certain days, too, when tea-sorting or other mystery of the trade is being pursued, the teashop is a very posy, with its crowd of little maids, each dressed in her holiday best and wearing a resplendent *obi*, all working with a will, and, if one may judge from, their hearty laughter, enjoying the fun amazingly. Notwithstanding such examples to the contrary, however, it must be confessed that "Our Neighbourhood" has a dilapidated, not to say, in many places, a tumble-down appearance. The main street has a cloistered look about it, from the projecting verandahs on each side thereof. It is always damp, even in the summer time; fungi sprout luxuriantly, and it is here that the moss lies thickest on the roofs. Nay even the house-leek and the purple iris, where thatch usurps the place of tiles, may be seen in full blow upon the housetops. An air of repose

habitually pervades the place. But when the summer sun is strongest, and the drowsy hum of the bee and the shrill chirp of the cricket is loudest, and the stonemason, laying aside his mallet and chisel, and the blind priest, intermitting his monotonous chaunt, follow the example of their neighbours and stretch themselves in slumber, stagnation would best describe the state of our venerable thoroughfare. Nothing stirring save, perhaps, a surly dog as he snaps in his sleep and snarls at a persistent horsefly, or an uneasy cat upon a roof, looking for a shaded spot with, if possible, a breath of wind playing on it, whereon to take her nap.

Most of the houses in our village have gardens attached, and in cases where that is impossible for want of room, the good folks are content to make what show of greenery they can by means of potted shrubs, or perchance a solitary tree or clump of bamboo, which are often reared in such contracted spaces that the wonder is how they manage to exist at all. Through many an open door a glimpse may be caught of what, perceived through the dim foreground of the house, might almost be characterised as fairy scenery. In that little backyard, for instance—too small to admit of gardening on the flat—the boundary wall is pressed into the service. How tastefully the hardy ferns have been inserted between the moss-grown stones taught to steal over whose surface a tiny stream, caught upon a projecting stone, is changed to a mimic wa-

terfall, tinkling and plashing musically into a rocky pool below amongst the golden carp, in pleasing unison with the artificial grot on which the eyes, tired with the sun's bright glare are glad to rest themselves! But a real Japanese garden, such as the priest boasts of, who shall describe its wonders? The lake, with its high-arched bridge, over which a Wisteria trained along a bamboo-frame displays its clusters of purple flowers, and flings a grateful shade, of which the fat carp below are glad to avail themselves, when, languid by reason of the summer heat, they seem too lazy to do aught but lie still and pant;—the miniature mountain ranges, perfect in their perspective, with their cliffs and chasms, and dried-up mountain torrents, overshadowed by trees which, dwarfed to be in keeping, are so knotted and gnarled and bent that they convey an idea of great antiquity;—the banks of azalea, billows of pink and white flowers in spring time; the groves of plum and drooping cherry, leafless but blossom-laden and perfuming the air whilst yet the snows of winter are on the ground; the scarlet *momiji* and yellow *icho*, bright bits of colour amongst the sombre tints of Autumn,—the double camelia with its dark-leaved tree, the narcissus, the lily and the purple iris, have each their place, and every month brings its own special bloom. Then the curiously fashioned stone lanterns, with their quaint pagoda-shaped tops turned up at the corners, looking like silent sentries petrified

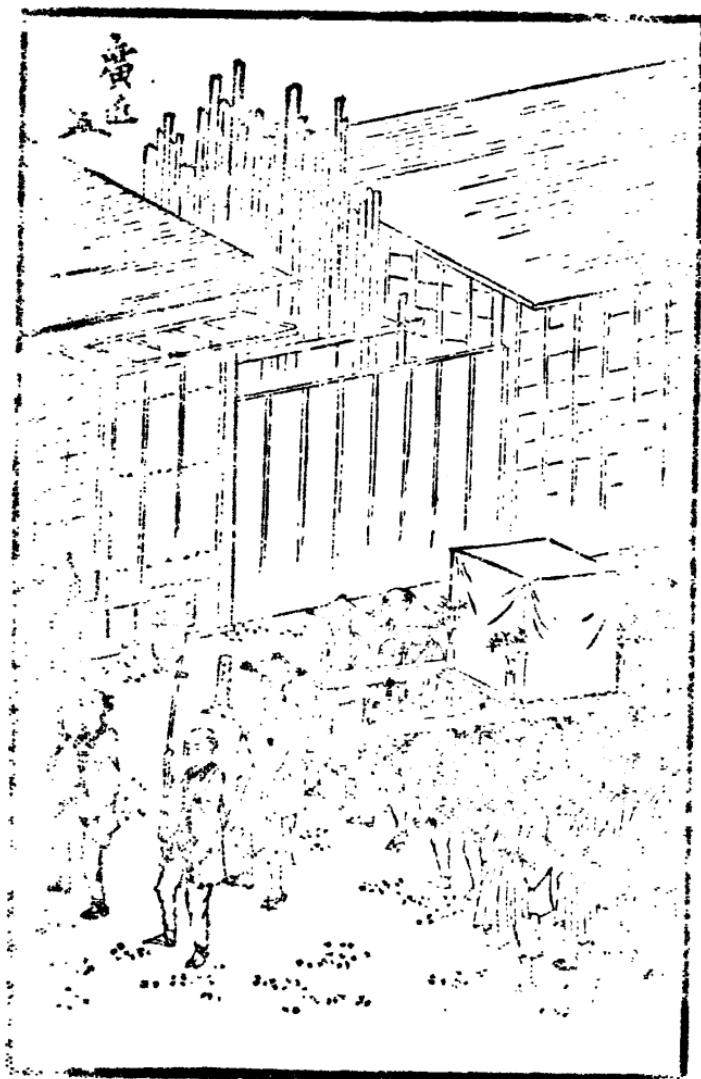


into still life, and grown grey and moss-covered at their posts, all, all combine to form a little landscape whose varied beauties could hardly be surpassed.

Our main street, generally so quiet, is alive to-day, however, for the funeral of a person of consequence is winding its way along, and has attracted all the residents from their houses to see it pass. There stands the old grey-haired *momban*, who lives alone amongst the dreadful-looking implements which, ranged behind his doorway, ought to be sufficient by their very appearance to deter from entering, the assailant they are intended to resist, but which are now as obsolete as the *momban* himself, or the ponderous gate of the *nagaya* which he is supposed to guard, and which is never opened and leads to nowhere. The waggish stonemason has left his work to have a look, and, perhaps elated at the prospect of a headstone, is cracking an unseasonable joke with the rice merchant next door. The surly clog maker, the *saké* man, the fried eels woman, the umbrella maker, and even the blind priest, are all out and speculating on the condition of the deceased.

The object of their curiosity looks like a huge bridecake as it is being borne along shoulder-high by four men who step together with precision, and when their shoulders ache change places on a signal from one of the foremost bearers. It is all in virgin white, square as to the body, but rounded off

into a blunt pyramid above, which is topped with a gilded ball, the four pagoda-shaped corners thereof being also ornamented with yellow metal which glistens in the sun. A scalloped vallance, each scallop having attached to it a gilt paper leaf, depends from beneath the pyramid, and a similar one appears from below the first. A hollow piece of bamboo at each corner of the coffin and attached to the trestle on which it is borne, is filled with sprigs of a tree called *shikimi*. Full a hundred men are decently following in the coffin's wake. They are very quiet and have a subdued and mournful look which is not without its effect upon the spectators. Of these from twenty to thirty wear reed hats, and are dressed in blue *hamishimo*, or winged dresses, the two nearest the coffin, however, excepted, who are dressed in brown, or tea color, as it is called; and every man carries a *wakizashi*, or short sword, stuck in his belt, the handle of which is carefully wrapped round with *hanshi*. But the funeral cortège soon passes out of sight. The last follower has turned the corner, and the neighbours, hitherto straining their eyes in one direction, and speaking in whispers, have turned round and formed themselves into groups, and as the cause of the momentary interruption of their habitual stagnation passes away, these soon break up, and the good folk dispersing to their usual avocations leave the neighbourhood once more as placid as a mountain tarn when the ripple from the summer breeze has lost itself upon its shore.



A FUNERAL.

THE SAKÉ SHOP.

The *saké* shop is, without doubt, the house of most pretensions in "Our Neighbourhood." Not that there is only one *saké* shop, for there are several; but the big one at the corner, wherein resides the Worshipful the Mayor, exceeds so much in size and solidity all the other wine-shops, that in comparison with it they seem mere pretenders, contemptible outsiders, little pettifogging retailers of drams to be drunk on the premises—shadowy nonentities on whom the definite article would sit as incongruously as a new hat upon the head of a beggar. The *saké* shop, on the other hand, built round a fire-and robber-proof godown, which towers substantial-looking in the middle of the less solid but more ornamental looking circumstructure, is like a goodly apple, sound from core to rind. It is in a commanding position too, occupying the angle formed by the forking of the main street into two minor thoroughfares, and is visible at all points to the

bibulous whom business or pleasure may have decoyed into "Our Neighbourhood." The house, on the principle perhaps that "good wine needs no bush," does not display one, although most of the smaller shops are garnished with that emblem, which in such instances is composed of twigs of a tree called *sugi*, carefully fashioned into a ball. One very out-at-elbow establishment however, the proprietor of which, as might be expected, is remarkable for his neglected and unkempt appearance, is contented with a ragged bough. This is in a side street fortunately, and so does not outrage the decencies of the main thoroughfare. The master of the *saké* shop has a grave and solemn deportment as becomes a civic functionary and merchant of respectability. He does no work himself, but seems to spend his time in smoking and warming his hands over a *hibachi*. He trims the charcoal fire occasionally, and now and then pours out for himself a cupful of hot water which he sips in a thoughtful and abstracted manner. He is always well-dressed and clean-shaven and wears his hair in the old fashion. He's a good customer to the little barber, who treats him with great deference accordingly.

The accounts are kept by a *banto* or clerk, who sits behind a little rail, and rattles his *soroban* unceasingly. Within the smallest limits conceivable he has everything he requires to hand. Account books of every shape and size hang within easy



A SAKÉ SHOP.

range. Behind him is the strong box, with drawers and cup-boards ornamented with fantastical designs in iron-work, of the flimsiest description however, and which, though supposed to give an appearance of great strength, could not resist the most infantile and inexperienced of burglars. Before him is his little table, scarce twelve inches high, which supports his inkstone, *soroban*, small coin, *kinsatz*, pipe and spectacles; whilst to his left hand and packed away away into a corner, stand the inevitable *hibachi*, kettle, tea-pot and tea cups. He's never in a hurry, and will calculate your change to a fraction of a *tempo* whether you will or not.

In addition to the *banto* there is the shop attendant, whose duties are multifarious: a glance at him will discover, even to the most casual observer, that he is a character. He's always in a bustle, and serves his customers in a most snappish and disagreeable manner. Whether it be snatching out a spigot and drawing off the *saké* into a square-shaped measure, or dashing salt into the scale, he's equally ferocious. Perhaps he relies on such a demeanour to economise his time by driving away the gossips. Certain it is that purchasers never loiter long in the *saké* shop, and the business might not prosper were it not well known that here the best of wine and the fullest of measures are to be obtained. Are not the rows of carefully-matted tubs branded with the choicest brands? Is it not a tradition in the neighbourhood that the tapster is

better acquainted with the virtues and qualities of every brew than any man living? Can any man hold forth more learnedly on *hanazakari*, the flower in full bloom, the prince of wines,—the *yebisz dai*, with the red carp saltant stamped upon the cask—the *ōtari*, with the character *dai* beside it, and the representation of a target pierced through the centre with an arrow—the *musō ichi*, or unrivalled, and the *fukubōtan*? Does he not carry on his daily work beneath a sign whereon may be deciphered that “here may be procured the *san toku shu*,” or *saké* of three virtues, which keeps out the cold, appeases the hunger, and wraps in sleep him that drinketh thereof? He’s a quaint-looking fellow truly, is our tapster! He has as many sides and angles as a prism. Regarded from the right he is a man of intelligence and ability, his eye is piercing and his look bright. From the left however, he’s a blank and whimsical absurdity, all vacuity. His wandering, aimless orb is ever skimming helplessly about, lighting upon nothing, but fluttering like a swallow at sea. Address yourself to his right side, and you find yourself in conversation with a man of parts; cross over to the left and you feel inclined to adopt an infantile syllabary or humour him as a *crétin*. Observe him by the front aspect, and you are face to face with a riddle. You find yourself ever wandering from right to left and back again over the bridge of his nose, and wondering why he was so constructed. His harlequin visage is a medley of

judge and jester. On occasion, however, his left eye seems to do good service. See him peering into the bunghole of a *saké* bucket—how he flashes his right eye into the gloom as he turns the vessel round and round :—how eagerly he seems to follow any detected impurity as it bobs about, and looks as if he longed to stab it with his sharp nose ! On such occasions his unattached and roving eye keeps guard outside. How it swoops down the side street—circles back again—delays for a moment over the master—skims past the *banto*—hovers over the *saké* tubs—flutters for a second or two on the lacquered buckets let out for presentation purposes, which lie upon the shelf in the corner—gets entangled in the cobweb and finally darts out of the door again, who can tell whither ! In truth it's a wonderful eye, that left eye of his !

Temper notwithstanding, the tapster is not an unpopular man. "Our Neighbourhood" is proud of him, although few people are intimate with him. He is looked upon as a philosopher and his sayings are retailed. He's exclusive as to his acquaintance, but he has his cronies nevertheless. The stone-mason is his best-beloved gossip, and rarely does a day pass that does not discover the two in conversation. See, here he comes, swaggering down the main street, his face still red and body steaming from his bath. The day's work is done. It is the cool of the evening, and the tapster is sitting at the door enjoying his pipe, a fine opportunity for a

talk. "Good evening to you ; fine weather, but still hot." He's down on his heels now, pipe filled and lighted. The two smoke for a little time in silence, but gradually the pipe of the tapster goes out and musingly he commences :—"There are many things in this world which I cannot understand, and one of the most inexplicable to me is the pleasure that some people take in making others drink *saké* against their wills. What a face of disgust the invited one displays—how he collects his eyebrows into a frown, and contrives to spill his liquor when his would-be entertainer has turned his back. If he tries to escape by running away, he is seized and brought back again.—If he gives way unresistingly to the temptation, observe the results : no matter how nice a fellow he may naturally be, he becomes all at once a repulsive maniac. However healthy until now he was, he becomes before your eyes a patient afflicted with a grave disorder, and lies upon the floor forgetful of the past and future. The day of merry-making ends in misery ; the next day is no better : he still lies there, his head is racked with pain, he cannot eat a morsel, he's more dead than alive, forgets all that passed the previous day, and his public and private business are both neglected—is it not a cruel thing to reduce a man to such a state ? It is opposed to the laws of hospitality and justice."

"Then again, look at the confirmed drunkard.

How he laughs and talks without reflection ! What a sight he is, as he reels along with cap on one side—his *obi* loose and dress disordered. His *hakamas* are hitched up and shins exposed, his whole appearance is so ridiculous, that in such a state his friends are unwilling to recognise him. In the tea-house, again, he stares insolently, laughs loudly, squeezes the hands of the waiting women, forces fish into their mouths and himself eats in a disgusting manner, and probably winds up by dancing and singing, and shouting at the top of his voice. Nay you may even see old priests who, overcome by wine, are so far forgetful of decency, as to bare their shoulders and disclose their dirty bodies to the lookers-on. Why should this *saké* be called by many the chief of ‘the hundred drugs ?’ In my opinion it were much more fitly designated the origin of ‘the ten thousand diseases.’ Well and truly has Shakka spoken when he says that ‘the man who induces another to partake of *saké* against his will, his soul shall pass hereafter through five hundred generations of beings without hands.’”

The stone-mason, however, who is not averse to a cup now and again with a friend, notwithstanding his habitual deference to the opinion of his crony, mildly urges that “there is something to be pleaded in favour of strong drink,” and that “the subject ought not to be too hastily considered.” “See how,” he observes, “see how the circling wine cup wakes

the 'ten thousand pleasures,' when friends, gathered round the fire on a moonlight night or snowy morning, tell tales with hearts to which care is a stranger. And when one's loneliness and melancholy are dispelled by the advent of a friend, how one's bosom expands under its genial influence! Who refuses a gift of fruit and wine from 'behind the curtain'? Who is insensible to the comforts of a small snug room in winter time when the snow is on the ground and the wind howling without, the kettle bubbling on the fire, and by your side an intimate friend? Under such circumstances is it not right pleasant to have a fill of *saké*, without which your enjoyment is not complete? Remember that the proverb says, 'drink and sing while you may, for one inch before you reigns black night.'"

THE STONE MASON.

Hard by the *Saké* shop may be seen the stone-mason's studio. It is garnished with blocks of stones of all shapes and sizes, and every degree of hardness, which, piled on either side of the entrance, seem to be patiently waiting their turn to be chipped and smoothed and carved and inscribed. On the right hand of the door stand two wicked-looking stone griffins, who seem to be putting their diabolical old heads together, and whispering over some horrible secret as they regard one another out of the corners of their cruel eyes, which, with their rims painted red, look as if they had grown bloodshot from being ever on the watch unwinkingly night and day. The unevenness of the pedestals on which they sit has inclined them towards one another until their heads almost touch, and they appear to have been momentarily interrupted in their goblin conversation, as, with raised paw, they listen for a repetition of the sound which has

aroused their suspicion. Their capacious mouths, distended with a ghastly grin, disclose each one long dog-tooth. A horrid grin in sooth it is; not by any means the grin of good fellowship which lifts up the corners of the mouth, nor yet the sardonic *risus* which depresses the same; but the cruel, satisfied stony grin of a cunning and malignant purpose—a purpose with a certainty in it of accomplishment sooner or later. They look the petrified impersonation of evil. Not one trace of impatience or doubt is pourtrayed in their grim visages, but, instead, a fell steadfastness of belief, and a calm expectancy, that their opportunity for evil will arrive at last. One almost expects to see a paw raised a little higher, and applied to the side of the nose, and a blood-shot eye closing in a dreadful wink, as one of the monsters, watching his opportunity to fall off his pedestal, crushes to death the children who play about his base.

It is pleasant to turn from the contemplation of so much malignity to the sturdy stone-mason himself as he stands, with legs apart and hands behind his back, critically regarding a work of art which he has just completed. Good humour beams in every line of his honest countenance. Can it be that such an amiable looking individual is the fashioner of the dragons just described? Perhaps he has freighted them with his own evil passions, cast out as it is said the fox rids himself of fleas, who, we are told, when troubled beyond endurance, takes a bunch of

dry moss in his mouth, and, seeking the nearest river, gradually submerges himself, dipping in first the tip of his tail, and then by slow degrees immersing his whole body, so that histormentors may have time to ascend as he descends, and seek a refuge in the moss. When his nose is just disappearing he sets free the freighted island which bobs along merrily adown the river, while he himself, relieved in mind and body, seeks again the bank and retires happy and contented to his haunts. Be that as it may, however, certain it is that the children of our "Our Neighbourhood" love to congregate about the workshop of the stone-mason, and the elder folks greet him with a cheery word as they pass his door. He looks a thorough workman—dressed in blue, tight-fitting casings for his legs, and a light blue coat girt up at the corners, and tied around his body with an *Obi* which supports his pipe-case and tobacco pouch, and though worn and sprinkled with stone dust his garments are neat and appropriate.

The object of his admiration is a little head-stone of great pretensions. It is tinted blue and carries a gilded inscription upon its face, and on its sides are displayed, upon the right a gilded tortoise and a lily in full bloom, and on the left a crane marching majestically along in a field of blue. It has a special purpose, on doubt, has this highly ornamented stone, and is made to order. Perhaps it records the untimely fate of some little child, or tells the passer-by when some sweetheart "ceased to be."

Chip, chip, chip, he's at work again ; the times are good and business brisk, so he has not much time to waste in looking at his handiwork. He keeps his spirits going by shouting a roystering song, or chaffing the blind priest's maid opposite, when she shows her face at the door. He's a merry fellow, and of a sporting turn too, if one may judge by the fighting cocks which he keeps in a corner in separate cages, and which shew by their battered and bloody bodies, from which most of the feathers have been plucked in many an encounter, that it cannot be altogether for their ornamental appearance that they are cherished. He sets great store apparently by these warlike fowls, whom he addresses occasionally and regards affectionately when he intermits his labour to have a pipe.

A pair of lop-eared rabbits too, may be seen upon a shelf above his head, and by the door a cage of canaries, a present from his friend the little barber.

He is a great believer in the importance of stones to the whole human family. He'll discourse quite learnedly upon the *nebukana* the *idsuishi*, the *aoishi* and what not. "What more noble and lasting medium," he's wont to say, "can you find, wherewith to transmit to children's children the mighty deeds of their ancestors?" He's quite triumphant over the *Kanameishi*, in the vicinity of "Our Neighbourhood." This is a stone remarkable for its many virtues, amongst which may be placed, in the front rank, its efficacy in relieving of his dis-

order the sufferer from *kakke*, or *beriberi*, and strengthening the legs of pilgrims. It is shaped like the pin that fastens a fan together, and cannot be removed by digging. The more one digs down in fact, the more hopeless the undertaking is said to become.

For is it not well known amongst the villagers how that three men, stimulated by promise of reward, dug unceasingly day and night for three days in hopes of reaching its roots? And that attacked by fever in consequence of a subtle emanation from the stone they were constrained to desist from their attempt, no nearer the solution of the mystery than when they had commenced their labours.

Numerous cures by it, are reported in "Our Neighbourhood," and it is the rankest of heresy to question them. There are but two other such stones in the mighty city of Yedo, one at Kôji machi, and the third at Riôgoku bashi, and the whereabouts of each is marked by a pile of salt, which, as tradition tells, has been scattered there for centuries.. This salt is rubbed into the soles of the feet by such as wear clogs, and is dropped into their shoes by the soldiers from the great barracks, who are largely afflicted by the complaint it is said to cure, and who even fill their pocket-books with it for future use.

THE BARBER.

That the barber in the main street of "Our Neighbourhood" is an impudent little wag, is an indisputable fact. If anyone can be found incredulous enough to throw doubt on this statement, he has only to go and stand before the barber's shop door for a moment or so, to convince himself of its accuracy. He must, however, be indifferent to ridicule, or at best, not *very* sensitive, if he hopes successfully to withstand the shouts of laughter directed towards him, which are sure to follow the jokes at his expense which will be rapidly fired off from the corner of his mouth by the barber aforesaid, who will look the while as sedate as it is possible for anybody outside of the Society of Friends to appear.

Although the shop is a somewhat mean-looking little structure, and appears all the smaller by contrast with the big rice store and the cake maker's, between which it is situated, it is nevertheless very popular, and much frequented by the idle and

unshaven, the former of whom esteem its proprietor for his good fellow-ship, and the latter for his dexterity with the razor.

Tradition relates that he once had a rival in the shape of a travelled barber, who, penetrating into the dull quiet of "Our Neighbourhood," had the hardihood to plant a flame-colored pole,—set off by a blue spiral and surmounted with a gilt ball—in a flower pot before his door, and to announce upon his paper windows that this is a "KAMI HASAMI TOKORO," or establishment in which hair-cutting is neatly executed. The neighbours, it is said, were as dumbfounded with astonishment at his assurance as it is possible for such sleepy old dullards to be, and for many days the little barber's place was thronged in consequence, much tobacco was consumed, and many speculations were indulged in. "What does it all mean?" said the neighbours. But the little barber said nothing, except that occasionally when he shook his head more despondingly and heaved a louder sigh than usual, it is averred that he was heard to mutter gloomily that "the country was indeed going to the dogs." It has been recorded that never before nor since did he work so well, or shave so many heads and chins of a day as during the time his enemy's staff flourished in the green flower-pot. A kind of combination was in consequence, it is supposed, started to support him, whereby the radical interloper found himself avoided, and our old friend was rallied

round and became more popular than ever. Had any old neighbour trusted his chin to the hands of the stranger he had better have packed up his effects first, for "Our Neighbourhood" would assuredly have had none of him thereafter. Whether curiosity would have finally got the better of their resolution if this state of affairs had lasted much longer, there is no saying, had not the stranger disposed of that question himself. For one morning a rumour flew round, that he had disappeared, and every body flocked to his house to make sure the news was true. Yes there *was* no mistake about it. The enemy had rooted up his pole, and decamped in the night with his scissors, pomatum-pots, razors, shaving chair, ("who ever heard before of being shaved in a chair," the neighbours said) napkins and all. A charcoal boy who met him on the road brought in the news that he was told by him, whilst giving him a light for his pipe, that of all the dull places he had ever visited—and he had "travelled a deal," he'd have him understand—"Our Neighbourhood" was assuredly the very dullest, and that he'd sooner exist for the remainder of his life on pickles and rice elsewhere, than have eels and *saké* three times a day and be obliged to live in such an unfashionable locality. From that day our little friend was himself again. His sprightliness returned. He was as saucy and as full of jokes as ever. If gossip was the staple commodity of "Our Neighbourhood," and had any marketable value, he



would assuredly drive a roaring trade. But although gossip won't pay *per se*, and is only occasionally an equivalent for a feed of eels, and a treat of *saki* from a friend, yet it stands him in good stead, and is a notable addition to his stock in trade. Customers like to see a smiling face and be tickled by a merry quip, whilst suffering under the tedious and eke painful process of shaving. Shaving forsooth! Scraping—scarifying—skinning. Can any more successful instrument of torture, in a small way, be found, than a Japanese razor—at least to European faces?

The Main Street curves outwards a little at the barber's shop, and seems livelier here than elsewhere, in a great measure, no doubt, owing to the crowds of children that hang about the old *yashiki* gates over the way, on either side of which a *Moji Yaki* and *Amēya* have taken up their stations, and between which two attractions a lively crowd of little ones oscillates from morning till night. These old wizards are well worth a passing glance. The *Moji Yaki* or "letter burner," has left the monotony of Chinese characters far behind him, and might claim with justice a high certificate for efficiency in his art. To see him as he runs streams of sweet stuff up and down, and backwards and forwards again, over his heated copper griddle, and then peels them off when at the proper degree of brownness, and rolls them up into a basket, cross handle and all,—is very diverting, and would entertain many

whose beards have grown. Anon see him dab, dab, dab round spots of liquid cake, a smaller dab here, and a streak there, a bit of flat bamboo pressed into the row of dabs. Peel off and hey! presto! you have a string of young tortoises swarming up a stick.

The *Améya* is really a genius of a higher order. He combines painting and modelling together. He carries about with him his studio and appliances, and is prepared to execute any order, be it never so difficult. He'll stick you a bit of his tenacious barley gluten on a bamboo joint, and, puff-f-f-f—it's a white glistening balloon—pinch it in at the middle, fashion off the mouth, draw out a bit for a cord, wind it quickly twice round, and back again, tie it into a bow knot, and you have as well-shaped a gourd in a few moments as nature ever took months to produce. "Please, Sir! I want a couple of rats nibbling a bag of barley." Ah! My chubby little master, that'll surely puzzle him you think. Not a bit of it. He does not even stop to consider how it is to be set about, but takes in a twinkling out of drawer No. 2, a lump of his plastic material of just the proper size. This he kneads, and rolls, and pulls out into long glistening threads, and rolls up again, and when of the right consistency dusts it with rice flour, to prevent it clinging to his fingers, and then, giving it a pyramidal shape, pinches out a bit at each side of the apex, snips out with scissors a pair of ears, lengthens out the snout, pulls out a tail a-piece, fashions the cone in the middle into a



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bag, a couple of dots for the eyes of the rats, a streak of red paint underneath them, a bar of blue below that again, a puff of gold dust and—"Now my little boy, where's your coin? Your rats are finished."

To try and puzzle the old Artist by devising difficult commissions for him to execute, is a favorite game with the youngsters. He's equal to any call on his ingenuity, however, whether he be required to fashion a monkey swinging by one hand from a branch, whilst it encircles a little one with its disengaged arm—a pair of rats in deadly combat with their tails for weapons,—or a frog on his hind legs, daintily pointing his toes and shading himself from the sun under a mushroom which he uses as an umbrella:—no flight of imagination seems too high for him. The thought once conceived, his execution of it is marvellously rapid. He's a rare old fellow, with his high bald forehead and twinkling eye, his face well bronzed by exposure to sun and wind, and the lines and curves about his mouth deepened by the ready smile, which he has for all comers. He's a great favorite with the little folks—most of whom he knows by name—and has a merry word for all whilst his fingers nimbly ply their trade.

'But we are forgetting the barber whilst idling amongst the children. His workshop is nothing, more than a part of his sitting room, wherein his customers seat themselves when being shaved. He stands behind them during the operation, and has

to hand, on a shelf at his right, every thing he may require. In the centre of his shop stands his travelling repository of implements. This is a long narrow chest of drawers about three feet high, and highly polished, upon its summit is a brass basin, and at the side thereof, a wing of the same metal, which is meant to hold the unguent. This piece of furniture he always takes with him when he goes to shave the priest, or persons of quality. It is placed at present, being considered very ornamental in its way, between himself and his son, who is being brought up to the trade, and who is already esteemed a most promising young barber. To see him as he rocks his body from side to side and throws up his shoulder, whilst fine-combing a customer, you'd fancy he was dragging the poor fellow's hair out by handfuls. This apparent expenditure of force, however, is only one of the tricks of the trade, and is intended to convey to a bystander an impression of the great haste, necessitated by the crowd of customers, supposed to be waiting their turn to have their hair dressed, and queue tied, their poll having been first scraped clean by the father, who does the shaving, he affirms, because it requires a delicate and practised touch, which only one of his age and experience can hope to attain. See him now operating upon a customer, who holds a semi-circular piece of wood below his nose to catch the stubble mown down by the nimble razor. How he flourishes about his instru-



ment! What attitudes he assumes! No razor surely was ever before handled in such an eccentric way. You'd fancy him about to split a piece of firewood, or whittle a stick, and anon he's writing a letter, or juggling the weapon from hand to hand. - Yet he never makes a mistake, or draws a customer's blood, be his visage never so rugged and intricate. He can attend to several things at once, too. See him interrupted by a neighbour, just as he's shaving out an ear. He can give him the time of day and a merry wink, without intermitting his work for a moment. "Good morning, Mr. Barber, have you " heard the news?

"No, what's about to-day?"

"They've found the young priest who disappeared two months ago."

"No! That's not true!"

"It *is* true, though. I saw him this morning myself."

"You don't tell me so."

"I did indeed, he was taken out of a well in the neighbourhood."

"Ah! You've burst my liver (*kimo tsubushita*) I declare, but I always thought he'd come to no good, he used to drink so."

"He never drank at all; for I knew him intimately."

"If it was not drink, then, what else could it be, I'd like to know?" The little man loves to argue by the dilemma.

“ He was out of his mind for many days before, bewitched by the fox, it is thought, and the doctor says he has been exactly seventy-three days and a-half under water. Well! well! who'd have thought it?” All the time occupied by this colloquy he's been staring at the speaker, with great interest depicted upon his face, whilst his hands are busy with the customer's ear; yet, helix, anti-helix, tragus, lobule, he has traversed them all safely with his razor, and has actually commenced to trim an eyebrow, by the time his friend says goodbye. He has a word for everybody in or out of season. “ How hot the weather is” says a sleepy horse-boy, yawning whilst waiting his turn to be shaved. “ I'm quite exhausted this morning, having travelled three *ri* since daylight, and slept never a wink last night. The frogs in my place make such a noise of nights, that I lie awake and can only sleep in the daytime.” “ The what,” enquires the barber, interrupting the last speaker, just as he's making shift to assume a posture which will admit of his taking a nap. “ Why the frogs, to be sure, since the rains, with their croak, croak, croak, won't let me sleep.” “ The earthworms I presume you mean ? ” “ No, how's that? ” “ Here's a deplorable state of rustic simplicity for you,” says the little man, stopping for a moment to chuckle, as he's shaving out a nostril, and grinning at the company who laugh as in duty bound. “ Don't you know that the earthworm got his hoarse voice



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from the carp, who finding it useless to himself under water, beguiled the worm into giving in exchange for it his big eyes, on the plea that as he was continually boring underground, and in darkness he did not require to see? And in good sooth it was a fair bargain both ways, I think. Do you mean to say that you have lived so long, and never heard this before? Why, if it were not for me, some of you would never know anything. I declare it was only the other day that a fellow told me a pitiful story, of how he suffered under a priest's drum, in the same way, and could get no rest, and if I had not explained to him the danger he was in, he might have gone out at night, and got bewitched by the badger who, as every fool knows, goes about the country between dusk and daylight, beating his hollow stomach with his paws and imitating the drum, to entrap the unwary. I declare I'm thrown away amongst you. Head a little more this way Sir! if *you* please. That's it, Sir! thank you, Sir! Now then you're beautifully shaved. Wouldn't you like your eyelids polished Sir? You won't to-day, Sir? Thank you, Sir? Good morning. Well, come along next gentleman."

THE BLIND BOY.

Out of dreamland, probably few persons have ever seen a blind boy flying a kite. Some, considering that the pastime appeals to the sense of vision only, might be found to deny the possibility of its being indulged in at all under such circumstances. Yet it is a well known fact that though one of our greatest composers was deaf, he played as only a great master could, and, oblivious of every sound, produced harmonies which will last for all time. And if a deaf man could compose music, why should not a blind boy fly a kite? Homer was blind, and although it is not recorded that he ever flew kites, yet the contrary has never been stated, and an assumption either way is open.

However that may be, it is a fact easily ascertained by a stroll through "Our Neighbourhood" that the extraordinary sight of a boy, blind from his birth, may be seen any day of the week flying his kite with great dexterity, and, with remarkable relish for the game. Relish, is it written? What a feeble noun! Who shall describe the sight,—who adequately



THE WIND BOY.

pourtray our blind boy, as he stands with body bent forward and quivering with delight, as the kite tugs and strains to get away,—his poor lustreless eyes widely distended, his cheeks flushed, his lips parted and trembling with excitement, and every involuntary muscle of his hands in action, as his fingers play with the string, along which he has surely projected his whole soul to the toy amongst the clouds? “Hi! Hi! Stand aside.” “It is no use, my friends with the *norimon*, you address yourselves to a mere outline of a boy; the substance is far away above you at the end of that string, and cannot hear, call you never so loudly; bide a bit, and you'll find an opportunity to slip past, when the exigencies of his kite flying will require him to vacate the middle of the road.”

It is difficult to conjecture in what the pleasure of kite flying to a blind man, can consist. Physiologists tell us that a muscle or a special sense, abnormally educated, is trained at the expense of its neighbours. May not the converse likewise be true? That a sense or a muscle the less to be trained and fed is a gain of power and nutriment to the remaining senses and muscles, seems a reasonable supposition. To a boy in the enjoyment of all his faculties, a kite, as it soars aloft, is a glorious *sight*. If it only had string enough it would reach the moon, he thinks. A real old-fashioned school-boy used to love his kite, and treat it like a sentient being. How he'd coax it up, and in his excited imagination

endow it with life! A little more string and away it goes. "Off this time, it fancies," he'd say, until pulled up by the end of the tether. And then when slowly wound in to hand again, how reluctantly it seems to descend! How it plunges and struggles, and makes circles in the air, each smaller as its line decreases, until in a final effort to be free it dashes its stupid self upon the ground, and unable to rise again, lies as if stunned, whilst being slowly dragged along by the relentless fate who handles the string. All this to a schoolboy is glorious, but to a blind boy a dead letter,—a blind boy, *qui circumfusa sempiterna nocte in tenebris ruit*. A little attention to the phenomenon, however, will shew the soundness of the deduction (hazarded above) from the physiologist's postulate. Else why does he substitute his senses of touch and hearing for that of sight? Note how he directs his ear to catch the hum of the kite, and see how nervously he fidgets with the string.

He's deaf, moreover, as well as blind to everything that passes, whilst his kite is fighting with the winds. Can it be that—? But speculations such as these will drift us far away from "Our Neighbourhood" and the blind boy, and therefore, however entertaining, they must not be indulged in. The veriest of scamps is the blind boy, and apparently beloved by all his fellows. It is really a pleasant sight to witness the tender care that is bestowed upon him by his playmates. No better text was ever chosen to preach a homily upon the

beauty of charity and forbearance, than the conduct of these children towards their friend. Is it playing at tops, in which the game is to dash one top against another and knock it out of time? The blind boy is placed before his own top, and his fingers made to touch the adversary's. No hurry in his case; give him a fair chance, although the spirit of the game is to keep up the excitement by playing as fast as possible. Again a favorite game amongst the children of "Our Neighbourhood" is played with leaden counters, five of which are thrown upon the ground, and at one of which a player strikes with a larger counter, and if he hits becomes a winner. When it comes to the blind boy's turn to play, he's made to touch all the counters rapidly, and when he makes his throw the excitement is great, but when he's a winner it is trebled. Amongst the noisy urchins his voice is always loudest, and when he knocks his adversary's top over, or pockets the leaden counters, he's fairly beside himself with delight. His sense of hearing or smelling is so acute, however, that it is difficult to see him fully at work in his game; as should a stranger stop to see and wonder at him, he may be noticed at once enquiring from his nearest comrade whether a foreigner is not present, and then the noisy crowd is seen dispersing like a dissolving view, or a snowdrift before the rays of the noonday sun. Verily, "Our Neighbourhood" contains no more interesting denizen than "the blind boy."

THE BARBER'S TALE.

" Ha! ha! ha! It's the very best story that ever was told, I vow and declare. I would not have missed hearing it for worlds. Good morning, Mr. Stone-mason, I wish you all the compliments of the season."

A momentary halt to make his bow, and off he goes again laughing more boisterously than ever, and as he snaps his fingers at stray dogs, who turn round to look after him, and at passers by, who are startled and step aside, he's like nothing so much as a damp cracker that fizzes a bit, and explodes when least expected. To look at him cursorily, who'd have thought it was our friend the little barber? He's dressed so bravely, and affects such a swagger in his walk, that he looks at least an inch taller than usual and quite a roystering blade. There's a curious unsteadiness in his gait to-day which an enemy—if he had one—might perchance be ill-natured enough to attribute to any other cause rather than the slippery state of the road. But what if he did? Does not everybody know how

difficult it is to walk undeviatingly on wooden clogs when ice is on the ground? And isn't it freezing hard to-day? His face, if one may judge from the trifling amount of it which can be seen for his head gear, is red and shiny-looking and his eye is bright; but then the air of "Our Neighbourhood" is remarkable for its bracing properties, and even the old women look pippin-cheeked and comely in such weather, and why should'nt he? And so he goes on his way laughing and snapping his fingers, and beaming and happy. Nay, so beaming does he appear to be, that a subtle and ethereal fragrance seems to proceed from him, and waft itself towards the passers-by as he pursues his devious way, and it has been asserted—so ill-natured and censorious is rumour—that this aforesaid fragrance bears a singular and remarkable resemblance to the odour of *saké*. But then the maccaroni woman says it was the surly clog-maker that told her, and who ever minded what that vinegar-faced rogue averred? And even supposing for a moment that he really told the truth, what if it is *saké* that the little man smells of? Isn't it New Year and a holiday? And does New Year and a holiday come round every month? Behind his father trudges, with an air of great importance, his promising son the fledgling barber, bearing upon a wooden tray a present which is carefully covered with a silken cloth embroidered with gold thread, but which, for all that, seems far from secure from a fall on the road, so absorbed is its mannikin

bearer in an attempt to follow exactly in the foot-steps of his worthy parent, which, to say truth, is no easy matter, owing to his zig-zag method of progression. It may be readily conjectured that the pair are intent on a new year's call, and their destination is soon seen to be the *saké* shop, where their summons to be admitted is answered by the tapster in person, who bows profoundly, as he surveys his visitors with one eye, whilst he takes an observation of the sky with the other and answers with a smile:—"The same to you"—to the barber's "How do you do, I wish you a happy new year, and am glad to find you well. I am afraid," continues the little man, "that this is a very poor present which I offer you"—as he transfers the gift from the hands of his son to those of his friend,—"but I hope you'll accept it as a token of my esteem and regard for you."

"Thank you very much; on the contrary, it is a very handsome present. But won't you come in and partake of a little refreshment?"

Nothing loth, the offer is at once accepted, and they are soon comfortably seated round a glowing fire, and partaking of the good things which the hospitable tapster has produced for their delectation, amongst which be sure that a cup of good wine, well warmed, is not forgotten. There are no customers to try his temper to-day. The shop is closed, and the master is away, so the host is bent upon enjoying himself, and the gossip of "Our

Neighbourhood" has in him a complacent and smiling auditor of the stories he is so full of and retails so well. "Did you hear the narrative of the dogs," he enquires of his friend, hardly waiting for his answer in the negative to laugh boisterously and clap his hands as the humour of it tickles his fancy. "It's the most diverting tale I ever heard, and it is in every man's mouth. I told it to the blind priest this morning and he declared I burst his liver. Thank you; well, just one cup more, and then I'll tell you all about it."

"Be it known to you then, that a Japanese dog who had contracted an intimacy with one of foreign extraction, overpowered with admiration and envy of his friend, was desirous of learning from him, with a view of bettering his own condition, how it happened that their respective conditions in society were so very different. "How comes it to pass," enquired he, "that you foreign dogs are so much better treated than we? You are washed and fed, and kept in the house and made companions of by your masters, whilst we are kicked and cuffed and get naught but fish-guts for our food, and if we so much as put our noses inside the kitchen, are perhaps souzed with hot water."

"Oh, because you're a rough lot and useless withal. You are good for nothing but barking, and as regards that too, you bark at everybody without distinction. Whether it be a visitor, or your master going in, or out of, the house, it's all one to you.

Now, we never bark at any body but a robber, and otherwise conduct ourselves decently and quietly."

" You truly state the case as far as we Japanese dogs are concerned, I am afraid, but as example is better than precept, may I request that you'll give me a little instruction in deportment? I am most desirous of occupying the same place in the estimation of my master as you enjoy in yours, and shall feel very grateful for any hints which you may be disposed to impart."

" I shall be delighted, I am sure, to be of any assistance in my power, and as I am going out for a walk, you cannot do better than accompany me and observe my demeanour. Now, my good friend, don't lurch about in that lazy fashion; such a gait may suit a butcher's cur, but is wholly inadmissible in a dog of quality. You see with what ease and elegance I trot along. Nothing confers such an air of good breeding as attention to such matters. A thought less curl in the tail; head well up and just a trifle on one side. H'm; yes, that will do, but before we start no barking and yelping if you please. The only occasion on which we ought to indulge in such noises being, as I told you before, when thieves are present, and then it is always right to raise an alarm."

With such and many other pieces of useful advice on the one part, and much deferential acquiescence on the other, the two dogs pursued their way very pleasantly and profitably, visiting many places and

projecting many future excursions ; and there is no saying what might not have resulted from their friendship had not business or pleasure carried their footsteps to the Okurasho, where, to the horror and dismay of the foreign dog, his native bred companion, taking a hasty survey of the place, was seen to raise his head in the air, and throwing his ears back, to set up such a howling and barking that the very sparrows in the gutters ceased their chattering for a moment to see what was up, and the foreign dog was at his wits' end how to put a stop to the din. Seizing an opportunity of a pause for breath, however, he proceeded to rate his friend soundly for his misconduct. "There you go again," he says. "You could not hold your tongue for a couple of hours, but must take advantage of a public place like this to make yourself ridiculous, and disgrace me."

"What!" returns the Japanese dog in an outraged tone :—"Did you not tell me that I should always bark at thieves?"

"Of course I did, what then?"

"Why, I've taken a look round here, and as I see none but thieves, I've followed your advice: that's all!"

The little barber ceased ; and when the mirth which the story had occasioned had subsided, the tapster, having filled his pipe and lighted it, sat smoking in silence for a moment, looking contemplatively on the fire with one eye, whilst the roving

one danced unrestrainedly over the remains of the feast which lay scattered around; and finally as he raised his head to speak, dived into a cobweb which an impudent spider had spun in the corner of the *tokonoma*.

“Yes,” he observed, “your story is indeed a good one, and reminds me of the *Kamishimo* thief of which you have no doubt heard before this.”

“No, indeed, I cannot say I have, and I would gladly hear it, but that it is so late and I must be going. I thank you for the entertainment. I have enjoyed the benefit of your society for the past year, and hope I may continue to do so.”

“You are very kind, and I am sensible of the honour you have done me in calling on me so quickly. I hope you’ll come and pay me a long visit when the days lengthen.”

“I shall be delighted, and I hope you’ll reciprocate the call.

“I shall not fail to do so. Good bye. Good bye.”

THE TAPSTER'S STORY.

That the little barber had not heard the origin of the expression "*Kamishimo* thief" was very remarkable indeed, but that he should have admitted his ignorance was even more extraordinary. Perhaps the tapster's good cheer had something to do with it, for he is well known in the neighbourhood as an attentive host, and the excellence of his wine is an excuse in itself for the rapid circulation of the wine cup. To many persons such a supposition would be a conclusive reply to their speculations on the subject; but a story-teller balked of his narrative, and a philosopher withal, is not so easily satisfied. "Why did he run away so abruptly"? ruminated the tapster; "just as the evening was fairly commencing, and I, generally so silent, was becoming conversational? Some very urgent reason must have interfered to prevent his seizing an opportunity of hearing a good story. He certainly was in great haste to be off, but if he has not forgotten all about the affair by to-morrow I'll find out everything whilst being shaved." So saying, he knocked the ashes out of

his pipe into the brazier, and returned it to its leather case ; then extracting his padded quilts from the receptacle in which they had lain hidden during the day, he prepared his bed, and having lighted his paper night lamp, and arranged his wooden pillow to his satisfaction, was quickly wrapped in slumber, regardless of the noisy rats who squeaked, and squealed, and scuttled about over his head between the boards of the ceiling.

Not so the little barber, however. Perhaps if the tapster had overheard the rice man's wife who lived next door to the shaving shop, in conversation with the macaroni woman next morning, he'd have learned the secret of his guest's precipitate retreat. "He made such a noise going into his house," she said, that he waked her, and then she couldn't get to sleep again for listening to the scolding he was getting all night." But the macaroni woman only shook her head and laughed, and added—"And serve him right too, for a nasty little gossiping busy-body who knows every body else's business better than they do themselves."

All the old folks know that the macaroni woman's first husband divided his time, to her annoyance, between her house and the barber's ; playing back-gammon continually at the latter place, and only going home when hungry to eat his macaroni. Nor, after all, was it news to her that the little man had a shrew at home ; for it had better be conceded at once, as a fact pretty well understood in "Our

Neighbourhood," that he was no hero in his own house,—a circumstance much to be regretted, as it was nearly the means of losing him a good story, which, but for the laudable pertinacity of the tapster who told it as follows next day, might never have reached the ears of the good folks, whose sufferings under the razor, it is to be hoped, were forgotten whilst listening to it, and who had an opportunity of benefitting by its moral.

"Many many years ago," he commenced, "before the tide of western civilization had set in upon our shores, and the people of Japan had not yet abandoned the customs of their ancestors; when men still wore the costume which for centuries had been recognized as their national dress, and shaved their head and beards as becomes decent and respectable people,"—the little barber here heaved a sigh and said "aye! aye!"—whilst yet the *Yamato damashi*,¹ the spirit of old Japan, was abroad, and retainers of a chieftain still loved and reverenced their lord, and the lord was a father to his dependants,—in such a good old time, I say, a certain Dainio renowned for his wisdom and benevolence, assembling his household together, recounted to them the following story. He had been for many days annoyed and perplexed, he said, by reports from his steward, to the effect that a thief was in the habit of entering his wood-store nightly, and of helping himself to its contents, so well calculating his opportunity that hitherto he had completely escaped apprehension, and not afford-

ed any clue to his identity. Surmising, he continued, that the place was carelessly watched, he had made up his mind to lie in wait for the thief himself, but without imparting his intention to anybody ; so that, secreting himself before nightfall, and having waited patiently for many hours, he had been at last rewarded by hearing a stealthy foot-fall, and the moon, appearing from behind a cloud for a second or two, had revealed to him features which he recognized as those of a labourer of his own. That feigning the voice of the man's father, he had softly called him by his name, and bidding him make haste, had commenced to toss him down bundle after bundle of wood with great rapidity, curious to see how much he could carry away. "But judge of my surprise," he said, "to find that the man was not only content with a very moderate quantity, but actually reproached *me*, his supposed father, for fancying him base enough to steal more fuel than he actually required. "Why should I take more than is actually necessary to cook our supper," he whispered. "Far be it from me to do so base an action." Struck with the noble scrupulousness of the man, honest even in his thieving," I have assembled you here to day" said he, "to see me reward him for his virtue, and to that end I desire my steward to make him such suitable provision as shall relieve him from the necessity of stealing for the future. The man who robs because he is necessitous is the slave of circumstances, and is to be commiserated, and the

man to be despised is he, who is base enough to take advantage of an official position to thieve, a gentleman, a *Man in Kamishimo*."

"Ha! ha! ha! Very true, very true! I verily believe the dog at the Okurasho had an ancestor at that meeting, Mr. Tapster. I always thought it was no harm for us poor folks to steal a bit, but for a man in office it's—detestable," said the barber, as he tied the knot of a queue, he was at work on, so viciously, that he held his breath over it, and only relieved his mind and his lungs simultaneously as he pronounced the word "detestable."

THE "KAMIKUDSUHIROI,"
OR
PICKER UP OF PAPER-SCRAPS.

In the early mornings, a mean and sordid looking being may occasionally be encountered, prowling stealthily about the lanes and alleys of "Our Neighbourhood," a thing of "shreds and patches," for the grotesqueness of his garments, which are pieced and darned, and tied together regardless of colour or congruity. The lower part of his face is concealed beneath an old and tattered blue cotton kerchief, leaving naught but his eyes exposed, and a huge round reed hat, begrimed with dirt and pulled well forward, completes his head gear. His legs are encased in rags of many shades of blue, which are kept in their places by multitudinous pieces of rope, and on his mud-bedabbled feet are tied straw sandals. As he dives in and out of foul passages, and lingers by dust heaps and pools, from which he seizes stray bits of paper by means of a long pair of bamboo tongs, and tosses them into a basket which he carries on his left arm, he looks like an unwholesome bird of prey who lives, but does not thrive, on offal. Nobody



THE KAMIKUDSUHIROI.

seems to give him the time of day. As he slinks along the very dogs seem to shun him, as well they may, for it is said that the fraternity to which he belongs is the enemy of their race. A well-fed dog of large size is to him indeed a prize, for the sake of his skin, which he'll strip with great dexterity, and prepare for the drum maker. For the purpose of securing his victim, it is said that every member of his class is provided with poison of a tempting kind, which he drops unseen, returning at night time to ascertain the result of his stratagem. A very few days ago, a passer-by might have seen in the vicinity of "Our Neighbourhood" a couple of these human jackals, watching from a hiding place, and gloating over the agonies of a dog in the throes of death, whose sudden and unaccountable illness they alone could doubtless give a reason for.

In and out he goes, across the road and back again, hovering for a moment over a cinder heap, thrusting his tongs into a wisp of straw, investigating sewers, and peeping into cesspools. He rarely lifts his head from contemplating the ground, and never raises his voice to shout a rollicking song, like that young carpenter yonder, who swings along at quick-step with his box of tools on his shoulder, and wakes the echoes of the neighbourhood as he goes. But then the carpenter is not an *Eta* like the *Kami kudsu hiroi*, who is a hereditary outcast of the class of tanners, and whose duty it is to attend on criminals, bury dead animals, and perform such other menial

and degrading offices as may from time to time be required of him by the authorities.

Not but that there are fine lusty healthy-looking fellows to be found amongst the *Etas*. Witness the mender of old clogs who plies his trade daily in the sunny spot at the side of the cake shop in the Main Street of "Our Neighbourhood." His face covering is not always so carefully adjusted but that one may catch at times a glimpse of a manly resolute-looking face, a little the worse for want of shaving, perhaps, but not the less a pleasing visage for all that. Nor does he seem an object of aversion like the waste-paper man. He's generally surrounded by children, who peer under his broad hat, and play with his tools, and prattle to him as he does his work; and now and then an old neighbour or two may be seen squatting on their heels in conversation with him. It is difficult to understand why the repairing of clogs should be esteemed a more degrading occupation than their manufacture. Yet the surly old clog-maker of "Our Neighbourhood" would take it ill, no doubt, were he expected to replace a broken thong.

But to return to the *Kami kudsu hiroi*, or picker up of waste-paper, whom we left pursuing his loathsome calling. By this time he has emptied his basket, (which he had contrived to fill whilst we loitered with the cobbler), into a sack, that had hitherto done duty as an extra garment, and tying the same upon his back, has added to his miserable figure an un-

sightly hump. A brisk morning's work will sometimes furnish him with enough material to admit of his filling his basket again, and even allow of his adding another protuberance to his person in the shape of a bundle tied round his waist, so that by the time he has arrived at the waste-paper shop whence he started on his rounds, his rotundity and lagging step are in startling contrast to his lean appearance and rapid gait when first encountered.

The waste paper shop where he delivers the results of his industry, is a squalid-looking cabin, retired a little from the roadway, as if ashamed of its dilapidated appearance. Its supports have sunk so much on one side that it is quite out of the perpendicular, and has to be propped up to keep it from falling down outright. The moss-grown thatch of its roof, and the green and slimy drain before the door, not to mention the umbrellas, which, stuck on the ground to dry, in the space between it and the next house, look like a crowd of overgrown mushrooms, combine together to give the place an air of rank unwholesomeness not illbefitting the business which is carried on within. Piles of dirty paper occupy all the available space inside the house, and have even overflowed into baskets and boxes outside. Three squalid-looking women are constantly employed in sorting and arranging and packing into bundles this material, and it is said that the care with which they execute their task is not unfrequently rewarded

by the discovery of a bundle of *kinsats* or so. From this uninviting looking establishment the paper is sent to the *Kamiszkiya* or paper mill, where it is macerated, and reduced to pulp, and remade into a grey coarse looking paper called *Asakusagami*, to be again sold, and perchance dropped, collected, and remade as before.

The process of making this paper is a very primitive one. The pulp, of the consistence of thin cream, and the color of very dirty water, is run into shallow troughs, before each of which a woman stands in a hole or sunken tub which reaches to her waist, and dips in a bamboo sieve, running it about beneath the surface of the fluid, until an even layer of sediment has settled upon it. When she is satisfied that she has secured a sheet of paper, she closes the sieve with a lid, and stands it on its end to drain, and proceeds as before with a second sieve. By the time she has finished with this one the first is sufficiently drained to admit of her taking out its contents and laying them on a board, whereon each successive layer is placed, separated from its fellows by a long straw, which she carefully interposes to prevent the half-formed paper sticking together, and also to assist the attendant who dexterously separates the sheets by its means, and spreads them on boards and so exposes them to the sun to dry, from which each is finally lifted when sufficiently hardened to take a rank amongst papers, packed in bundles and sent to the dealer.

UJIGAMI NO MATSURI.

There has been quite a religious fever lately in the Eastern Capital. It has been epidemic in whole districts. It has spread like a conflagration, blazed with exceeding fierceness for a day or two, flickered, wavered and died out, only to break forth again in some other quarter. We have, in fact, been praying by parishes. A bamboo decorated with particolored paper has been seen by some one, who straightway, has hied home and spead the news, when, phew! as if with a train of gunpowder, the community is set on fire and nothing is discussed save the approaching festivities. As the longed-for day of celebration draws near, work is gradually relaxed, and activity of another kind takes its place in every household. The family wardrobe is examined, and holiday attire scanned, and dusted, and patted, and ironed.

An *obi* becomes a momentous anxiety. Hair-pins and heartaches are synonyms. "Be sure you are in time," has been pleadingly urged in persuasive accents by many an imperious beauty to her hair-dresser, whose importance has increased for the nonce

in the ratio of her engagements. "Be sure you are in time good *Kamiyui*, for by to-morrow's dawn I shall commence to dress." Here's a notable opportunity for mistress barber to pay off old scores of slights and cross words; but she is of a peaceful and good-natured stock, and so, the first rosy streak of light sees her at her post, and as much exercised about the choice of colors or the introduction of a comb as young Beauty herself. The morning, notwithstanding the many misgivings and the anxious scannings of the heavens of the night before, has arrived, bright and sparkling as the waters of Chusenji, when the early sunlight flashes on them through the mountain mist. His rays seem reflected in the happy and eager faces of those who are preparing for the festival.

The temple of his godship, which has been in process of decoration by willing hands for some days back, is now brave with flags, and paper prayers. Booths have been erected all round it, for the sale of toys and sweetmeats and other trifles. A lusty priest is at work upon the drum, and a band of volunteers all dressed alike, is in waiting to seize the *Mikoshi*, or divine car, and start out with it on their shoulders round the district.

And now everything is in readiness:—the rubicund Abbot, a coxcomb in his frippery, decked in his canonicals has just adjusted his scarf to his satisfaction;—the noisy fellows with the iron staves strung with rings at the top, have their jingling



THE NOVEL

rods poised for the stroke and are only waiting for the word. The *Mikoshi* bearers tighten their *Obis*, and even forget to chaff one another in the excitement of the moment, nevertheless there is just time for that sly fellow, with the miniature cask of *sake* slung at his belt, to take a pull at it himself, and pass it to his neighbour when, Clash! go the iron staves, Bang! Bang! Bang! returns the drum, and they're off.—Out of the gates they rush, iron staves to the front, and the jolly priest with his shaven head, and shining face, closely followed by the Temple money-box, bringing up the rear. “*Yot choi, wat choi*” grunt the bearers in an undertone as they whisk the *Mikoshi* along. Round and round it goes, across the road and back again, until the brazen bird upon the top, looks like twenty birds as it flashes and trembles in the glowing sunlight.

“*Yot choi, wat choi.*” Out of the way all ye who ride or drive, for, be your horses never so restive, we don't care; into the ditch with ye—anywhere out of the way. “*Yot choi, wat choi,*” faster and faster they go, until the jolly priest, unused to such violent exercise, is bedewed with perspiration and is fain to mop his bullet head and lag a little. How they whirl and toss the thing about! One minute it is shoulder high, and anon it sinks to thigh and knee, till they seem to be playing a game of football with a piece of furniture. The brass peacock is becoming shaky on his legs, and looks as if he'd like to fly

away and be at rest, but ever and anon as a bearer falls out another is ready to take his place, and so the game is kept a-going and the football never reaches the ground.

But there's a method in this madness. He of the shaven pate has an eye to business all the time, so he stops the *Mikoshi* bearers opposite the *Nagayas* until the occupants thereof discharge their obligations, and a shower of coins, the latter of which are carefully picked up and transferred to the money chest, whereupon the *Mikoshi* men, hoisting their trumpery, give a shout or two and are off elsewhere. But every stoppage entails a drink of *saké*, to keep the volunteers in good humour, and their excitement at the proper pitch, so that when evening has arrived, never was seen such a capering, shouting bacchanalian crew, and they vow between their hiccups, as they seek their homes at nightfall, that of all the jolly days that ever were this was certainly the very jolliest.

In the mean time the temple is by no means deserted. Crowds of well-dressed women, for the most part accompanied by chubby children, (whose young heads have been shaved in fantastic patterns, the remaining love locks being tied in *queues*, with twisted paper), are busy at their devotions or drinking and smoking, or cheapening toys, or gossiping with their neighbours. How polite they are to one another! What exaggerated honorifics they employ as they praise one another's garments, or admire

their mutual children! "I am torn with anxiety
anent your ladyship's most exalted rheumatism."
"I am prostrated with gratitude at your magna-
nious interest in such a despicable creature as
myself."

Make way for a new worshipper when you have said your prayer and wakened up the deity by a tinkle on the bell. He may be asleep, or perchance he is hunting, you know; and be sure you don't forget the money-box. "But I'm leaving the neighbourhood, and shall enlist under another god in a day or two." "The greater reason why you should act liberally by the present one. Don't you know that he hands over his clients when they change their quarters, and would be able to say a good word or two for you. Who has kept you in health for the year past? Who has saved your house from fire and storm and the fearful lightning? Out upon you for an ingrate; an' you cheat his godship, I would not wear your *obi* for a Daimio's revenue." And so the money flows in, and the rubicund priest's eyes twinkle till he seems to be winking to himself, as he rubs his fat hands together and thinks of the eels and *saké* in the box. And indeed a wise man will not offend a priest. He has much in his power with a superstitious people. He has been known to tumble down the headstones in a graveyard, when improperly, or rather insufficiently garnished with the votive coin by a degenerate posterity.

In addition to the excitements of the *Mikoshi* and

the Temple proper must be reckoned the *dashi*, or allegorical cars, which may be described as platforms erected upon rough, springless carts, on which plays and character dances are exhibited to the music of the drum and fife. Over these platforms are constructions supporting devices of many sorts, which generally culminate in a grotesque representation of the human figure. As these performances are conducted with much noise they are the centre generally of an admiring crowd, whose appreciation of enjoyment may be summed up shortly as *saké* and shouting. As these rude constructions lumber along upon their way, the neighbours standing at their doors are fired by enthusiasm at the sound of the drum, and shout and join the throng ; and the very children raise their tiny voices and clap their dimpled hands, until what with *Mikoshi*, *dashi*, *saké*, chat, shouting, drum-beating and alms-giving—never was seen before such a state of excitement as may be observed in “Our Neighbourhood” on the anniversary of UJIGAMI NO MATSURI.



THE DASHI.

NAGARE KANJO.

In the remote suburbs and outskirts of Yedo the wayfarer may chance to have his attention occasionally arrested by an unusual-looking object by the roadside. This is neither more nor less than a piece of Japanese linen, inscribed with a name, and suspended by its four corners to as many square-shaped stakes, which have been driven into the ground. Behind may be seen a wooden tablet with a short story upon it, and by the side thereof a bucket containing water with a wooden ladle standing in it.

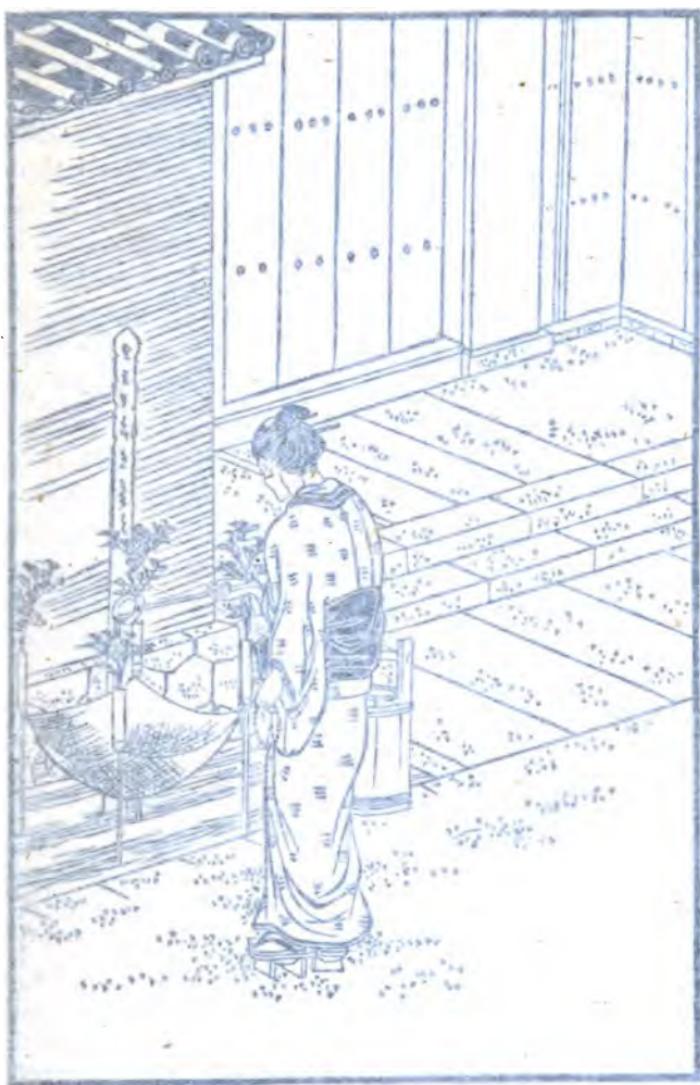
And should a friendly eave, projecting a long shadow upon the dusty road, beguile the pedestrian into seeking a temporary asylum from the fierce rays of the sun, or should his curiosity, aroused by this novel sight, arrest his footsteps for a moment, he may perchance be afforded food for further speculation, by observing a passer-by ladling a measure of water upon the linen, and waiting with some shew of reverence, until the fluid had passed through before resuming his journey.

This singular proceeding will probably provoke a smile at the simplicity or a sneer at the superstition of the people; but a shade will supplant the smile upon thy kindly face, and a sigh mayhap take the place of the sneer, O Loiterer! when thou learnest the story upon that wooden tablet, and hearest why the water is poured through that piece of linen.

An event, than which the round of "ills that human flesh is heir to" contains no sadder, is here recorded. Can any circumstance exceed in pitifulness that which demands a mother's life at the moment when her joy is fullest? A life for a life? Such a tale is here set forth.

Amongst the simple-minded Japanese it is received that such a death is a judgment for some deadly sin, committed either in this or a previous state of existence, and for which the poor deceased is bound to suffer further penalties in that unseen world to which her troubled spirit has winged its flight.

Her punishment and the length of time required to purge her of her sin, and permit of her taking her place amongst the *Jōbutz*, or elevated beings, (for which word our angel is hardly an equivalent), varies in different cases, say the priests. It bears, however, a curious ratio to the means of the sorrowing survivors; as, in accordance with the sum paid by them, it is found that the period is short or long. This is ascertained by the contrivance above described, for when the linen hanging between the posts



NAGAMINE, FUSUMA.

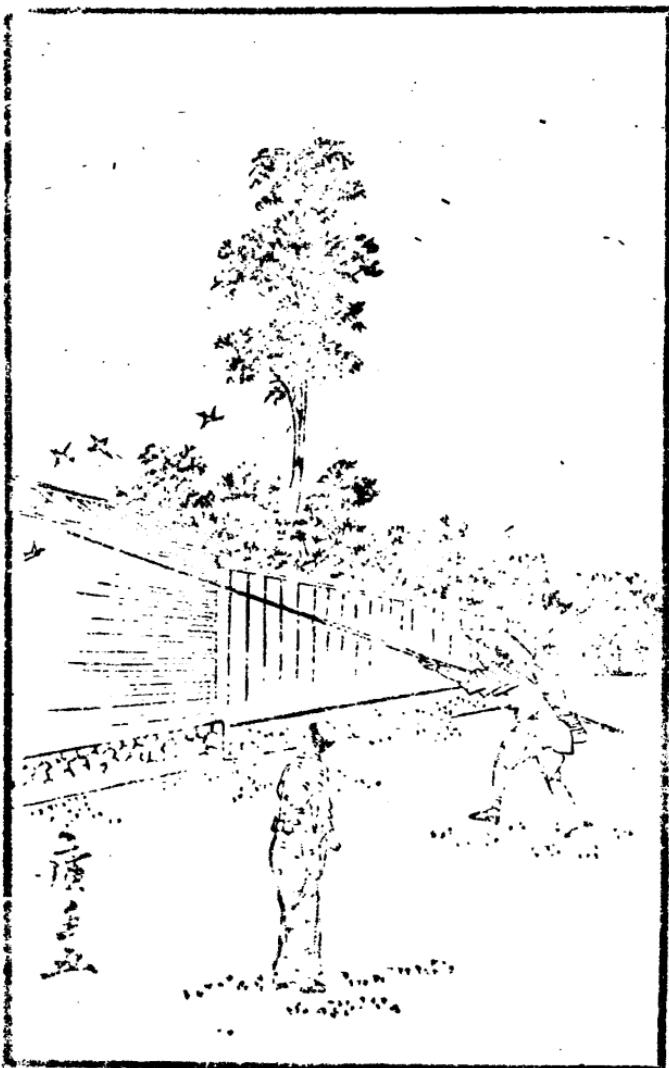
gives way, and will no longer contain the water which is poured upon it, the unhappy suffering soul is released, but whether this release is effected by, or is merely *coincident with*, the rupture of the cloth, I have not been able to ascertain.

However that may be, it is well known that a rich relation paying a round sum receives from the priest a piece of linen which has been carefully scraped thin in the middle, so that it gives way at once, whilst the poverty-stricken survivor, alas ! must drag his chain of suspense through the coarsest canvas. But he has, in consequence perhaps, the sympathy of every passer-by, on whom the mute appeal to drop a ladleful of water, for the love of heaven, is never lost ; for whatever faults there may be found amongst the Japanese a want of kindness and sympathy can never be included in them.

THE SPARROW CATCHER.

By the early riser, a quaint and curious looking sportsman is occasionally to be met with pursuing his game about the streets and alleys of "Our Neighbourhood." Dressed in a close-fitting suit of blue cotton and almost concealed under a huge reed hat, he sneaks along, crouching under the eaves of houses, slinking through gate ways and diving down lanes and alleys. Clean shaven and neatly dressed, his supple figure and piercing eye indicate an individual well-to-do in the world, not indifferent to appearances, and self-reliant withal, notwithstanding his stealthy tread and eccentric movements. Watching him as he stops suddenly, and, bent half double, stares restlessly at an opposite house, then creeps across the road, and, listening a moment, moves off again, one feels sure that were he in London, Policeman X would inevitably apprehend him as a suspicious character intent on a felony.

But while we are speculating on him, where has he disappeared to? He was here a second or two



THE SPARROW CATCHER.

ago, and there are no side streets within a hundred yards.—Oh ! he is only standing on an old well, and looking into the second floor front of an unoccupied house. Very mysterious conduct, surely, with not a little of the insane about it. But he has too business-like a look in his face to permit more than a momentary doubt of his sanity.

Whew ! he is round the next corner, like a flash —through a gateway, and across a strip of garden, and, by the time we've come up with him again, is walking in a leisurely, not to say a *déagré*, way along a stable front.

What *can* the sparrows be about this morning ? They have a great deal to say about something, and are as vehement and noisy and argumentative over it as was ever a board of guardians over increased expenditure, or a knot of washer women over a cup of congou. They've even attracted the attention of our sportsman, who, by way of diversion perhaps, introduces another subject for their debate, for, applying an instrument to his mouth, he sets up such a chaffering and chirping and twittering that no sparrow of any spirit could possibly stand such an intrusion. The assembly is accordingly broken up, and down it comes from ridge-tile to eave to see what's in the wind. One sparrow, more inquisitive and adventurous than the rest, balancing himself on the edge and cocking his knowing little eye, has hardly time to express by his look “what's up now?”—when, quick as lightning, a bamboo rod,

besmeared with bird-lime, is dashed at him, and, a struggling prisoner, he is lowered to earth by our friend the sportsman, who, disentangling him from his slimy fetters, transfers him to a nondescript-looking receptacle slung at his back, and partaking of many of the characteristics of a fishing basket and a game bag.

So the mystery is solved, and the suspicious stranger is unmasked. He's a catcher of sparrows;—what can he possibly want them for? Probably sparrow matches, thought we; we 'll ask him and make sure.—“Not a bit of it, Sir! They are for eating; strung on a splinter of bamboo and roasted, they are superb.” “Indeed! how many have you in your basket?” “Just forty this morning.” “You must have been early at work then?”—“Well —yes, perhaps two hours.”

THE DOCTOR.

The rambler in "Our Neighbourhood" cannot fail occasionally to encounter in his perambulations a tall and commanding-looking personage, respectably attired in sober black, and followed closely by an old and wizened retainer in a sugar-loaf lacquered hat, who carries on his shoulder a square box attached to a pole. The individual in question is thin and sallow-faced, and wears his iron grey hair brushed back off his forehead and hanging to his shoulders. His gait and general demeanour are pompous and stately, and in keeping with the expression of his face, to which the corrugated brow and pursed-up mouth give an air of profundity and wisdom. The attendant may be dismissed in a few words, when he is described as bearing a striking resemblance to a tortoise on its hind legs, his pointed hat and oiled paper coat with short sleeves, inside which he conceals his hands in all weathers, combining to complete the likeness, and giving him an undoubtedly amphibious appearance. The similarity however ends here, for a glance at his red

nose and watery eye would force a conclusion either that nature has done him a gross injustice in hanging out such a sign, or that of the two elements in which the amphibia are at home, one at least is not popular with the doctor's man—for such he is—and the individual with the narrow forehead, whose back he continually contemplates, is none other than the doctor of "Our Neighbourhood" himself. Not that one chirurgeon is sufficient for our requirements. Quite the contrary, for we have several, but their reputation and standing are not of consequence enough to permit of any of the fraternity's sharing the definite article with the practitioner in question, whose surgery in the Main street, garnished with a huge and imposing sign, and emitting a medicinal odour as good as any advertisement, has had a reputation for the excellence of its wares for many years,—“aye, long before the birth of the present incumbent,” say the very oldest of the folks, who, vain of their great antiquity, and impressed by the belief that everything has degenerated since they were young, affect, when on the subject, to sniff a little, and shake their foolish old heads, because the doctor is not as old as his father was, when he shaved his pate, and, retiring from practice and the world, handed over his patients to his son, who, but for the mistake of having had a father, would probably have flourished without a standard of comparison being applied to his detriment. Saving, however, these drivellings of the oldsters, the doctor



THE DOCTOR

has no fault to find with his popularity, and if he is sensitive on the point, it ought to be a source of gratification to him to reflect that he is in turn a worm in the plum of every other disciple of *Æsculapius* in his district.

The establishment from which he starts upon his daily rounds is quite a marvel of little drawers and shelves. Root-choppers and mortars litter the mats, whilst black-lacquered boards with gilded inscriptions thereon inform the public of the "Thousand years' life pills to be had here,"—the "Mixture of a hundred ingredients,"—and many other nostrums too numerous to mention. In addition to these affirmatories he has a rare stock of hand-bills in which he wraps his potions. Some of them are ornamented with harrowing pictures meant to catch the eye, and all are brave with capitals. What wheezing asthmatic could resist the seductions of the "CLOVE PILLS, a recipe of this house?" "This honourable medicine," it is asserted, "is prepared in a secret manner, according to a recipe of divine origin, and there is no other medicine like it in the world. This unique and extraordinary compound," it goes on to relate, "is specific for the coughs of both grown people and children, no matter from what cause arising. When a cough lasts for a long time, it ruins the spleen, injures the stomach and destroys the five great organs and the six members, more especially in the case of young children, for in such instances a bad habit of body arises from which

spring the ‘hundred diseases.’ A cure, however, is guaranteed in the most deplorable cases by using one packet of the specific, and in hopeless ones by two. The symptoms will be found to improve in a most astonishing manner. For epidemic coughs at change of season, for ordinary catarrh, for hacking cough, for the cough which defies diagnosis, for the constitutional cough, and in fact, for all other kinds of coughs, this extraordinary combination will be found to have an astounding action. No matter how far gone the patient may be, it will be found to refresh his inwards, expand his chest, improve his appetite, and fatten him up in an amazingly short space of time. Of the many tens of thousands of persons who have tried its virtues not one has found it to fail. Its excellence can be tested by a trial, even the most hopeless cases are benefited by its use, and if several packets are taken a cure is guaranteed. Prepared and compounded only by Kahei of the Isei house.”

RHINOCEROS PILLS !

“A certain cure for tightness of the chest, pain, gnashing of the teeth, depression of the spirits, and in fact every other disease under the sun. An unfailing cure guaranteed if regularly used. These pills are best taken by being dissolved in *saké*. ”

PICK-ME-UP PILLS !

With a picture of a decrepit old man tottering in at one door of the establishment and leaving by an

other rejuvenescent. "Try the gold-coated life-helping pills!" &c.

WONDERFUL SYSTEM!

"This is the establishment for the cure of all kinds of diseases. The family to which I belong has been distinguished for seven generations for its successful treatment of every known disease. Of the many hundreds of patients who have been under our treatment, not one has failed to be cured. Tooth-ache cured on the spot."

BLACK BALL PILLS!

"Useful for curing twenty-one different descriptions of diseases."

THE FURIDASHI!

"A popular remedy for coughs and colds. It expels the devil and promotes the circulation. Some designing persons having in various places exhibited signs professing to deal in this medicine, I would humbly beg to observe that what is prepared and sold in these places is inert, as will be quickly discovered by any one foolish enough to try it."

THE MUSK PILLS!

"An infallible remedy for everything from a red face to a bed-sore. A pick-me-up after a drinking bout (in which case they are to be taken in salt-water). Every traveller should be provided with a store of these magic pills as a specific against sea-sickness, *kago* sickness, and bites of venomous reptiles."

These, and many other infallible nostrums too numerous to mention, may all be procured for a trifling charge from the doctor of "Our Neighbourhood."

In the old times he was wont when visiting a person of distinction, to herald his approach by having a banner or two carried before him. But times have changed since then, and he contents himself now with the single attendant who carries his medicaments.

But see! He has arrived at his destination, and is bowing his excuses for being late, and receiving in return profound apologies from the patient's wife, for having given him the trouble of coming such a long way, especially as he is certain to be so busy; to which she adds, she is very much obliged for his having come so soon.

"Pray don't mention it, my dear Madam. I am a little late, I must repeat, because I visited one or two houses on the way. Well! How's our patient?"

"He's lying yonder: I must apologize for the untidy state of the room."

These little preliminaries over, the great man, leaving his wooden clogs at the door, advances majestically to where the sick man is lying. "Pray don't get up on my account," he entreats, with a deprecating wave of the hand,—"Let me feel your pulse. Ah! Just as I thought."

A scrutiny of the patient's eye, a peep under the

upper eyelid, a look into the lower, an investigation of the nostrils, an examination of the tongue, follow next; and after each act a portentous "h'm," is delivered, as if everything was exactly as he expected, and he was in no wise to be taken in or surprised. Another examination of the pulse, (always the left in the case of a man), with head on one side, mouth pursed up, and brows well knitted, affords him sufficient insight into the case to permit of his delivering himself of the guarded diagnosis, that—"Ah, just so, he is rather.....really." A few questions here follow, and the examination is proceeded with. "Let me feel your stomach. Just so; I am afraid that the interior of your abdomen is not at all satisfactory. This is a very bad case. Does the doctor who has attended him hitherto, belong to the Chinese school ?

"No, he belongs to the Occidental, and since the patient has been attended by him he has only been the worse for it. He is a man of magnificent outward appearance, to be sure, but then—."

"What's his name and where does he reside?"

"Close by in Shimmichi, and I believe he is the gentleman they call Yabunouchi Yôchiku."

"If there is any of his medicine left I should just like to be allowed to look at it. Ah ! ah ! He has made a shocking mistake in his diagnosis. If you had only called *me* in, in the first instance, and used a medicine suited to the disease, the patient would have got well immediately."

"Dear me, Sir ! Is it possible ? Here, child ! Make haste and bring the water for the Doctor to wash his hands. Tell the Doctor's servant the medicine case is wanted, and be careful how you bring it in."

"Let the patient take of these twenty-four pills, twelve at once, and twelve again to-night. The descending principle is at fault and must be rectified. Of the medicine which I will send him he must drink a hot water cupful every hour, and let him smoke through his right nostril a pipeful of this powder, three times a day."

"Ah ! it would have been a good thing if we had applied to you long ago, Sir ! We have really acted very foolishly ; but the fact is, we did not think the case was serious, and your house, Doctor, is such a long way off, and we could not make up our minds."

And so he departs, having relieved the anxieties of the good people and confounded his medical brother. He is a great believer in the Chinese school of medicine, and a corresponding opponent of the Occidental. He refers every ailment to the two vital principles. If you have a headache, the *ascending* principle is at fault. Do you suffer from chilblains ? The *descending* must be rectified. When his art fails, however, all hope is not abandoned. The priest is sent for, who comes armed with bells, with which he accompanies his chaunting, and makes such a horrible din that he is said sometimes to arouse the dying man, and drive away the grim visitor for the nonce. If

this fails, as a last resource the picture of God is taken out of the *mamori bukuro* (or charm bag, which is worn hung round the neck, or hidden in the *obi*,) and drunk dissolved in water, and if this is unsuccessful the patient is beyond recall, and preparations may be made for his funeral.

THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

In a busy part of the Main Street of "Our Neighbourhood," and opposite to the Stonemason's workshop, may be noticed a row of houses, whose dilapidated and neglected appearance is at strange variance with the signs of life around them. The wood of which these tenements are built is green, and mouldered from age and decay, and the black and rotting thatch upon their roofs is loaded with tall rank weeds and verdant mosses. An air of being in Chancery pervades them ; of being ghoule-haunted ; of being fever-stricken, as the damp steams rise from off them when the sun is strong. Tokens of a precipitate exodus of their occupants are evident, for, through here and there a half-open door or crazy window, whose paper, mildewed and rotted with the rain, has parted from its sash and flaps idly in the wind, may be seen that the mats have never been removed, whilst bits of broken crockery-ware upon the floors, with now and then a tray or other article of furniture, proclaim the trembling hand which failed to serve its owner in his hasty flight. The

very signs still hang beside the doors, and tell the passer-by that here the Blacksmith lived, or there "all kinds of paper" were for sale. A wine-shop bush, still shapely spite of wind and weather, betokening what was once a house of entertainment, has not yet fallen from its rusted nail.

As if ashamed of their mean and shabby appearance, these houses slope backwards from the road in a slanting direction, each one, as it were, trying to hide itself behind its neighbour, all save one—a shameless building—whose corner, as it abuts upon the road, seems to thrust itself into sight and insist on being noticed, and its peaked gable to bespeak attention in a defiant manner, whilst its turned-up eave adds an appearance of being on the defensive, as an impudent school-boy is wont to raise his arms when in expectation of a blow. But these insufferable pretensions have no effect upon the neighbouring houses, for, save where it is hand in hand with its disreputable relations, it is cut off from communication, put into coventry, ostracised, excommunicated. The jolly old tumble-down constructions over the way, which seem to be leaning affectionately on one another for mutual support, and putting their venerable heads together, eye him askance. The saucy way, however, in which the eel-shop has been seen to wave her paper lamp about—scandalous in such an ancient house—it must be admitted, may have given sufficient encouragement and warrant for the bold and steadfast

glances which his dormer window constantly throws in her direction. It is useless, however, for him to make any advances to his next door neighbour, as a formidable gap exists between them which effectually prevents any attempts at communication, not to mention that the toy-shop has half turned her back to him, as if unmistakeably intending to give him the cold shoulder. From all which it will be gathered that, on the whole, a more disreputable and uninhabitable make-believe of a house it would be difficult to find. And yet a closer inspection will reveal that it is not without some reason for its evident pretensions, for it is occupied. Yes, spite of ruin and decay, and bad reputation, *the house has a tenant*. The neighbours nightly wonder at his courage, as they crowd round their charcoal fires, and when his name is mentioned shudder with affright if a rat so much as squeaks in the thatch, or regard with side-long looks their shadows grotesquely grouped upon the paper walls by the flickering lamp. And well they may, for even the Little Barber, whose reption for valour is established, holds his breath with horror whilst he tells the story of those haunted houses. For such they are said to be. The old folks say so, and the youngsters believe the tale. It happened in this wise they say.

Many many years ago, whilst most of us were children, and the houses themselves were not much older either, a Blacksmith from Asakusa came and

took up his residence amongst us—where you see his sign still hanging—and with him came his young and pretty wife, and infant child. For a season things went well with him, his reputation had followed him hither, and the neighbours had nought to say against his handywork or, indeed, against himself for that matter. But it came to pass that in course of time a good-looking young Paper-man who had hitherto lived with his parents in the big shop at the end of the street—with hopes, it is supposed, of bettering his condition, in an evil moment for all concerned, determined to leave the parental roof tree, and set up on his own account, and to that end choosing the vacant house between the *saké* merchant's and the Blacksmith's, he opened shop. Now, trade in paper being dull, or the old establishment absorbing all the custom—for the neighbours have always disliked change—it happened that our gay young Paper-man had much time upon his hands, and spent a deal thereof in the Blacksmith's house. In the mean time, for what reason it is hard to say, the Blacksmith began to grow fretful and morose; the cheerful “clink, clink” of his hammer oft-times intermitted, and he would be seen to sit for hours in moody meditation, instead of working diligently as of yore. And, by degrees, a further change was observed to come upon him; for, now, neglecting more and more the calling which had been his pride, he was seen to frequent the *saké* shop, and to return to his home,

not seldom with blood-shot eyes, and staggering gait to find his next door neighbour talking to his lonely wife, or perchance nursing the baby to which he had become attached, as becomes a kind hearted youth, and eke a good-looking young Paper-man. And so events progressed from day to day, the future shaping out itself, the visits of the Blacksmith to the *saké* shop becoming more frequent and prolonged, and the gay young Paper-man more assiduous in his attentions to——the baby; until one morning it fell out that the neighbours, noticing no stir or sign of life about either the Blacksmith's or the paper shop, determined on consultation with the *saké* merchant, (who had, he said, applied his eye and ear to a chink in one of the rain doors of the former house and discovered nothing,) to knock for admittance before sundown, and, in the event of receiving no response, to force an entry. As, however, hour by hour, the day wore on, and nothing happened to reward the curiosity of the idle group which loitered round the Stonemason's opposite, naught remained but to lift away a sliding door or two and solve the mystery. The Blacksmith's house was entered first, and found to be empty, but seemed to have been so recently occupied that the neighbours hastily retired as if half-expecting its owner to return and resent their unwarrantable intrusion. "And now for the Paper-man's" was the cry. But why do the foremost of the group press backwards from the half-opened door, with blanched and terror-stricken

faces, whilst those behind press forward and stand on tip-toe, and crane their necks to see what as yet no one has had the courage to describe in words? And what is it they see when they do succeed? Only the shapely young Paper-man lying on his face dead! Lying, face downward, upon a purple stain, with an inquisitive ray from the setting sun falling across his head and neck, and bringing their marble pallor into strange contrast with the ghastly stain beneath them, and by his side his right hand severed above the wrist. Unhappy young Paper-man! But a fresh horror is in store for the bystanders, who, hardly yet recovered from their first surprise, converse in whispers; for, from out the well hard by them, cries of anguish in a woman's voice are heard, and prayers for help, and, as wail after wail is borne aloft upon the evening breeze, the trembling crowd, impelled by panic, and the dread of being bewitched by an evil sprit, overturning one another in their hurry to escape, dispersed, each to his own home. All night the dwellers in those ruined houses heard the dreadful sounds, and when day had dawned, emboldened by the sunlight, they, headed by the *saké* merchant, put the cover on the well, in hopes to confine the evil spirit to its depths. Vain hope! All through that weary day the despairing moan grown feebler at intervals broke forth afresh, and the affrighted folks, afraid to leave their houses, were constrained to hear it, against their wills. But their horror culminated when, at dead of night, as slumber

was beginning to enfold in its embrace the worn-out watchers, an unearthly yell once more aroused them, and the fearful apparition of a woman dripping with water, her long black hair hanging in masses around her pallid face, and bearing a child in her arms, rushed frantically up and down before the neighbours' houses, beating her hands against their doors and begging them to open to her.

The few inhabitants who had not courage to escape by means of their back doors that night, lost no time in leaving the accursed place next morning, never to return : and since that time a ghostly woman, bearing a spectral infant, is said to go her nightly rounds, beating on the doors and calling for some one, whose name is not known, although many aver that they have heard it. That it is undoubtedly an evil spirit was evident by the fact that the cover was found to have been taken off the well on the night in which the apparition first manifested itself, and that therefore it had escaped thence is plain. And so the simple-minded dwellers in "Our Neighbourhood," to whom a ghost is an indisputable reality, and for whom even the mention thereof has terrors indescribable, have ever since shunned the haunted spot, and left its solitary tenant in undisturbed possession thereof.

Who, then, is the lonely tenant who has the hardihood to occupy this unwholesome residence ? Beside the door a signboard, ornamented with a scarlet sun and sky-blue moon reposing upon a curly

cloud, and underneath thereof six horizontal bars, five of which are bisected with a red streak, proclaim that fortune-telling by the Chinese method is carried on within, and is therefore a reply in full to the second query in the foregoing sentence, and as to the personality of the Augur none but a stranger to "Our Neighbourhood" could fail to know that he is the BLIND PRIEST. To such as may feel inclined to find fault with this apparently reckless expenditure of capitals and of the definite article, it may be necessary to state in explanation thereof, that there is but one Blind Priest in "Our Neighbourhood," and that any looseness of diction on such a point might encourage a belief that we abound in blind priests, and so scatter the rays of interest which should be concentrated upon a single object. For he is truly a remarkable individual, and worthy of attention. From earliest dawn ere yet the climbing sun has drunk the dew drops; till evening's glooms proclaim him risen on another world, a monotonous chaunt may be heard to issue from the open door, intermitted only on the advent of a client seeking to lift up the curtain which conceals the future, or ceasing for a span when, overcome by the heat of summer, the blind old man is forced to follow the example of the drowsy neighbours and is fain to slumber out the noon.

This chaunt is carried on in a low key and in a forced voice, the chest seemingly being first fully inflated and then gradually emptied of its air, until

the last words (if words they be) of each period, become by degrees more and more guttural and difficult of ejaculation; then with a fresh inspiration taken with a quick hissing sound, he begins again with renewed energy a full tone higher than before, and, as if a weight had been lifted off his mind, to gradually descend again, and so on without variation for the livelong day he continues to wind himself up and run down again, like a mechanical toy, tinkling his little bell at intervals, and stopping only for his meals when visitors are scarce. Whether this proceeds from a spirit of devotion, or is a remnant of his priestly craft, or is done in expiation of some heinous crime, the memory of which haunts him ever, is a matter for conjecture. Naught is known about his early history! That he was not always a priest, however, is understood, and that he has a strange liking for iron work of all descriptions, has been noticed. Nay, more, his knowledge of the technicalities even of the craft has excited surprise. But spite of friendly questionings and neighbourly espyings, nothing more is known about him now than when he first arrived some years ago. Nothing save that a blind man, travel-stained and careworn, with a bundle slung upon his back, had appeared one wintry day in "Our Neighbourhood," his footsteps guided by a little child who, following his directions, had led him straight to one of the haunted houses, since then his undisputed home. A tall and lean old man, but poorly clad, his pallid face

seamed and scarred by small-pox, and beneath his high and narrow forehead, a pair of sunken recesses to which the light of midday is but as the blackness of night. A taciturn, gloomy old man, who from the time he first appeared amongst us, has never left his dwelling, and who, since he hung his sign besides the door, has supported himself solely by the scanty proceeds of his fortune-telling. Within the open doors a passer-by may see a small recess, originally a portion of the room beyond, from which it has been cut off by patched and dirty paper doors. Pictures of Buddha and smoke stained legends in ancient characters ornament its walls, and on the mats and opposite the entrance stands a little table some three feet long by fifteen inches high, on which are displayed his divining apparatus, consisting of a handful of little rods (fifty in all), called *zeichiku*, kept for safety in a bamboo joint or pencil stand, and six small black blocks of wood bisected by a red streak,—facsimiles of which are displayed, as stated, upon the signboard outside—and which are called *sangi*. Behind this table sits the old fortune-teller, where, in pursuit of his calling, he is required to explore the future for, it may be, a gaping country girl anxious for a sweetheart, a shopkeeper looking for a runaway apprentice, or a husbandman enquiring for a favourable day on which to sow his rice. On these occasions his method of procedure is as follows:—Having rattled his rods together by rolling them between his palms, he

raises them to his forehead for a moment in a reverential manner, and then taking one from the bundle, lays it on the little table beside his right hand. He then proceeds; having divided them into two and rejected one portion which he replaces in the pencil holder, to count out by fours those retained in his hand, and in accordance with the broken number left he moves a block. This process twice again repeated by threes on these occasions, and a block moved as before, a combination of the blocks results, in which the characters upon them correspond with the number of a paragraph in a book of oracular responses, which when referred to is accepted as a satisfactory reply to the query. He does not, however, depend much upon the book, but trusts in a great measure to his inspiration. He will tell you that he passes one hour every morning in a religious trance, in which it is revealed to him what general form of combination of the *sangi* will be properst for the day. He professes to know beforehand that certain questions will be asked of him, and is prepared to answer them accordingly without much deliberation. Joy or sorrow, anger or dismay, he has found to interfere with the spirit of divination. He cannot depend upon his prophecies after such emotions.

But here comes a buxom little housewife to consult him. She is dressed in her holiday best, and her freshly-shaven eyebrows and well blacked teeth shew that she has made a careful toilette. But for

all that there's trouble in her honest face, and she is commencing a voluble torrent of explanation, whilst seeking in her purse for the quarter *bu* which is his fee, when he stops her short and says : " You've had a quarrel with your husband and are meditating flight. Be cautious what you do." A look of wonder and amazement quickly replaces her former expression, her eyes grow round as saucers, for a moment she forgets her search for the little coin, and then in a nervous hurry, drawing out her money, she makes her bow and leaves him still exhorting her. She is succeeded by a tall, robust old man who is very particular in his enquiries as to whether a certain accident, which it has been foretold will happen to him, is likely to be a misfortune or simply a wound, and goes away much comforted on being assured that nothing worse than a fall from a carriage and resulting bruise is in store for him. To him succeeds a youth who learns from the fortune-teller not only his private history, but is even told to his amazement that he has had a wound on one of his legs which has left a mark.

These clients gone and no one further appearing, after waiting for a little time the old man retires within the paper doors, and may be heard once more at his devotions, whilst the outer room returns again to gloom :—for but a moment, however, for a strange radiance has overspread the place. Can it be a ray of gladsome sunlight which has wandered in to brighten up the miserable dwelling ? No, scarcely

that ; for no sunlight ever penetrates that wretched chamber. Nor, if it did, could it draw aside a paper slide and lean against a mouldered doorpost. What is it then that sheds this cheerful glow around ? Only the Blind Priest's little maid. His comely little maid, whose bright appearance, whilst seeming to illumine all the mean and shabby room, in reality throws out of focus all but her winsome self. Behold her standing framed by the doorway, a charming bit of colour amongst the neutral tints around, her sweet face dimpled into a smile as she caresses the glossy cat she carries in her arms, or laughs back a gay rejoinder to the stonemason's joke about the moon at midday. How neatly dressed she is in her stone-grey garment bound in at the waist with a broad blue *obi* lined with yellow, whilst round her neck and beneath her upper dress may be seen folded across her bosom a roll of scarlet crape ! She calls the old man "master," but a something in her lineaments betokens close relationship. She is a general favourite, and is bashfully regarded by many an aspiring but faint-hearted young neighbour. Even the cut-flower man, rugged as though chipped out of freestone and terrible at a bargain, is not insensible to the charms of the simple little beauty ; for see, he has left his stock in trade at the fried-eel shop over the way, (whose mistress is still grumbling at her scanty nosegay), and striding across the road has thrust into the little damsel's hand an offering of his

choicest, and retreated again in haste as if ashamed of himself. How very pleased she looks ! She's pleasant to converse with, too. " Is she fond of cats ? " " Oh ! yes, and the master delights in them too. He keeps quite a number. *Neko*, did the gentleman say ? No, no, this is not a *nedzumi* or rat killer, he's a *heko*—a *hebi*, or snake killer, and that tortoise-shell fellow who has just come through the hole in the paper door is a *tōko*, or *tori* (bird) killer. *Otoko* did the gentleman say ? Ah ! I see he's joking, and I am such a poor hand at finding out a joke. Is it not strange the power that cats are possessed of ? I have heard the master say that in noble families when a member dies and lies in state, a *wakizashi* or short sword is placed beside his hand to enable him, if brought to life again by a cat sitting upon his body, to kill his tormentor. With us poor folks it does not matter, though, as we are hurried into our coffins at once. Extraordinary, indeed, Sir ! Then again,—but I hear the master calling for me and I must go. Good bye, Sir. Won't you come again ? "

THE STORY-TELLER.

The ancient city of Yedo abounds in out-door artists of every description. At any point may be encountered jugglers, dancers, street musicians, mountebanks and quacks, exhibiting their skill or puffing their wares to a delighted and appreciative audience. Nor are we in such matters one whit behind the mighty metropolis (although we are but country cousins) in "Our neighbourhood," for we have our quacks and jugglers—aye, and our begging nuns and friars too, who go from door to door chanting dismal ditties and keeping time to their droning songs with brazen rattles and little bells. But of what account is the whole crowd of them to the Story-Teller?

Our Story-Teller is a real old fashioned unadulterated retailer of stories and legends. In the vacant space opposite the gardener's at the end of the Main Street, he may be seen on fine days seated upon a raised platform beneath a matted roof, his figure cunningly thrown into relief by a white curtain hung behind him. From this coign of vantage



THE STORY TELLER

he delivers his lectures, and so completely does his audience hang upon his words that a glance at their faces will reveal at once the nature of his harangue before a new comer has heard a word of his discourse. Nor is his intention solely to amuse, as may be gathered from an occasional halt to listen to him, for instruction, like the silken thread that holds the string of pearls together, runs through his tales. For what though he glorifies the highwayman Goyemon, and delights to recount the deeds of the Forty-seven *rōnins*, who slew their master's murderer, and then, (their mission of vengeance completed) deprived themselves of life in order that their lord might have in spirit-land a decent following—such stories are but vehicles for teaching lessons of fortitude, fidelity and valour, and many a youth has felt his heart expand and thrill with the martial spirit of old Japan, breathed into it by the Story-Teller, long after the words which stirred his bosom had ceased to ring in his ears.

Apart from such considerations, however, the Story-Teller has his wife and family to support, and his object naturally is to gain the coin as well as the attention of his audience; and to such end when the contributions come haltingly he employs his tricks of trade, at which he is an adept, and stimulates the lazy purses somewhat after the following fashion:—“ Cold and clear as the sheen of the sword blade, the first chill rays of the rising sun, striking in through a chink in the shutter and contending with the

flickering lamp whose dull and yellow light scarce illumined the chamber, and which, as if abashed before its purer antagonist, grew yet duller and more unsteady in its presence, revealed by degrees the form of the watcher, who, watching now no longer, and, as if suddenly overcome by sleep, had congealed into still life as he sat. For, save that his head had fallen back against the door frame, he had scarcely changed his attitude or relaxed a muscle; his right hand still grasped the hilt of the sword which lay across his knees, whilst his left still clung to the scabbard.

"The sunlight, as it thrust its shining arm through the gloom, and disclosed the form of the sleeper, seemed to seize him by the brawny throat, whilst it threw out into bold relief the massive and unshaven jaw of Ishikawa. A sigh escapes him, and a shudder passes over his frame as he mutters in his troubled dream, 'Oh! Fuji my daughter, my darling!' and the sunlight, creeping ever upward, lingers upon a tear-drop glistening on his eyelid."

"Was that the rustling of a withered leaf? Or the wind playing with a wanton snowflake? Or the foot-fall of a man, creeping stealthily along—nearer, and ever nearer, crouching low as he moves?—Ah! watcher! unhappy, sleeping, silent watcher! Is no guardian spirit near to warn thee of thy fate? Awake! Arise! thy betrayer is at hand!—But the ever-widening sunlight, mounting from the rugged jaw to the massive forehead, flashes on no tear-drop now, for the gleaming eyeball and the quivering

nostril proclaim the dream is o'er; the watcher is awake; a moment more and—

"Three tempos, Good Sirs, and you shall have the remainder of the story:—for the absurd and contemptible sum of three tempos, you'll learn how Ishikawa comported himself in this terrible emergency. I've murders, and arson, and such tricks of fence and hair-breadth 'scapes to tell you of that if you heard them beforehand you'd never be content with giving twice the sum, but you'd all combine together to treat me to a dish of eels, and a measure of *saké* at the fish-shop round the corner, did my professional engagements permit of my sparing the time necessary for such a purpose."

Thus says the Story Teller, as, shutting up his fan with a crash, and rapping the table with it, he lays it beside him, thereby proclaiming a full stop which no human ingenuity can convert into a comma against his will; then taking a mouthful of tea from a cup at hand, he smiles to himself as he turns the fluid over and over in his mouth (thinking no doubt of the good things he has yet to tell) and then, suddenly ejecting it, raps a second time quickly on the table, as though to show how wide-awake he is, squares his shoulders, throws back the sleeves of his coat, sits more upright, clears his throat once or twice, and looks round impatiently the while as if waiting the word to commence, and only preventing by an effort the stories of which he is so full from flowing out of their own accord.

"A Personage of Quality hath heard of me, and languisheth to hear me speak :—a word from me, and I am a gentleman for ever. How would you fare were Tomikitchi gone from here ? "

A comical character, indeed, is Tomikitchi, whose loss would be irreparable to his admiring audience ; with accessories of the meagrest, but with assurance, and depth of voice, and tricks of oratory the most profound, he is a mighty artist in his way. How he sways his listeners, as, joining actions to his words, he pulls off his clothes with hottest haste to mingle in the fray so well described by him ; and what clenchiings of hands and cranings of necks are seen as he climbs to the apex of his tale ! And then to hear the long drawn sign of relief when he saves his hero's life ! How he shrinks and trembles in despair ! What onomatopoetic words he has at will—“*Gata gata gata gata.*”—How his heroes run across the bridge ! “*Burari furari*” ! How the *rónins* swagger ! “*Betcha betcha*” ! Don't the women cackle !—How he makes his audience shudder as he does the “*harakiri*” with his pipe ; his stage accessories a little table, a paper fan, a block of wood to rap with, a charcoal fire to boil his kettle, and an attendant cunning at infusing tea !

He knows his value and his listeners know it too, so he can afford to wait and smoke a whiff or two and withhold the sequel of his story until, shamed into liberality or actuated by anxiety to hear the remainder of the story, his audience makes a suitable

contribution, of which having satisfied himself by an inspection of the array of coins spread out before him for that purpose by the assistant, (who has been collecting them by handing about a little wooden tray), he begins again where he left off, as if nothing had happened to interrupt the current of his narrative, until, a sufficient number of new faces appearing amongst his ever-changing audience, he considers the time has arrived for a fresh appeal, and so on from hour to hour, with varying success, he pursues his calling with his eye well directed always towards the "main chance."

BY THE RIVER.

Only a dead body ! Naught but the remnant of what was once a man, a stalwart well-favoured man, floating down the swollen river. Floating down the river on his back ; floating past "Our Neighbourhood," slowly through the lotus leaves, quickly where the channel narrows, loiteringly amongst the shallows. That was all. Yet who observing from afar the merry group upon the bridge and the laughing youngsters capering along the river bank could have guessed that it was this ghastly object which had occasioned their mirth ? How they shout and clap their hands with glee as it sweeps round the bend, hurrying ever onward toward the sea ! What a rare game it seems when, entangled in the shallows, it appears to struggle and chafe at the delay ! How it bobs and bows as if in acknowledgement of the attentions it receives, as, freed again, it plunges amongst the mimic waves beyond ! Ah me ! it's caught upon the weir. Will nobody give it a push over, and keep up the game ? Hurrah ! it's off again ; it has shot the bridge and reached the

deep water beyond; a moment more, and, circling round and round in the eddy, it's out of sight, passing doubtless in its silent journey through quiet fields, under shady willows, and threading its way amongst the crowded shipping at the river's mouth, until, uncared for and unknown, it reaches the shifting sea, meeting perchance in its course with other drift of the same description as itself. Swept outwards by the ebbing tide to be returned again by its flow, it becomes a play-thing for the restless waves, which tumble and toss it to and fro, until, tiring of their game, a stronger one than usual deposits it out of reach, and leaves it on the shore, half buried in the mud, a prey to kites and crows.

Is life so cheap then that the simple-minded neighbours look with indifference on the evidences of a murder in their midst, and even the little folks see nothing solemn in the dead? It is hard to think so, and yet so it would appear, notwithstanding their gentle way of speaking of a friend who has "ceased to be," and who is always alluded to as *Hotoke*, or an angelic being. Perhaps their personal disregard of dissolution affects their minds where others are concerned. Be that, however, as it may, certain it is that, though sympathising with survivors, no vain regrets are wasted by them on such as from time to time have left "Our Neighbourhood" for ever. Nay, but not many moons ago a funeral party, whilst witnessing in respect to the surviving relatives, the cremation of a deceased friend,

had its silence broken only by the immediate descendants of the departed, who, squatted on their heels around the pyre, indulged in speculations as to when the burning box which contained the body would separate, and deposit the remains of their mother amongst the glowing logs. Verily, a strange people who can thus, as it were, sport and play with death !



KICHIBEI.

KICHIBEI, THE CAKEMAN.

The dwellers in "Our Neighbourhood," simple in their amusements as in their dress and manners, are ever ready to be diverted by the antics of a Merry-Andrew who, attired in a close-fitting blue suit and with his features concealed by a mask, may be daily encountered plying his trade and exhibiting his pranks and postures to an admiring audience ; nor, indeed, do the good people seem one whit surfeited with the exhibition, notwithstanding that they have witnessed it any day these many years past. Quite the contrary indeed : for no sooner is the brassy voice and the loud laugh of Kichibei, the cakeman, heard, than, deserting their several occupations, the neighbours, carrying their infants in their arms, crowd about their doorways to see and welcome him. He is in no wise to be confounded with the Améya to whom he bears a slight resemblance, and who, carrying an oblong basket suspended from a strap slung round his shoulders, pursues his calling in every quarter of the ancient city of Yedo, announcing his presence by tinkling a little bell and

chaunting out in a musical voice “*Amè no naka kara
Otasan to Kintasan ga tonde deta yô*,” thereby intimating to his patrons that he is prepared to furnish them with a certain compound of bean flour and sugar so cunningly blended, that, cut it whatever way they please, they’ll find a face within: long wise, or cross-wise, a red face will be found to peep out upon them from a white ground. Kichibei, on the contrary, is known only in “Our Neighbourhood,” and is therefore an institution with the old and young folks. He’s a sturdy, impudent fellow with a joke for all. Concealed behind a mask representing a fat-faced female with sloping eyes, a small mouth and dimpled cheeks, round which a blue towel is tightly bound, and carrying in his hand a fan, he lounges along from door to door bawling out “*Karintoya! Karintoya!*” But with all his leisurely movements he’s ever ready at a moment’s notice to divest himself of his box of cakes and dance a measure when so desired. Nor is he exorbitant in his demands; for a single *tempo* he’ll fling you a saraband, and let you taste his wares to boot. Observe him posturing before the tea-house yonder; what a merry group of waiting maids he’s entertaining! How they press forward to see him, and peep over one another’s shoulders, and laugh and clap their hands as he commences for the third time his contortions! He’ll make a little harvest to-day, for the youngsters, deserting the puff-and-dart man whose wheel of fortune has not revolved a turn since Kichibei ar-

rived, crowd round him with their coins in hand. The bean seller, too, depositing at the road side his gaily painted buckets, over which a scarlet umbrella displays its brilliant color, has taken his stand beside the strolling players intent on seeing the performance. A stamp with one foot—a pirouette upon the other—a flirt of his fan, and round about he goes : now he's climbing an invisible stair, and anon he's wagging his head from side to side and sticking his arms a-kimbo, or dashing his hands about in entreaty or defiance. But he has his rounds to make, and the children's coins must be garnered in before they find their way into the hands of other reapers ; so, the dance over and cakes distributed, hitching up his box, he's off again, wakening the echoes and announcing his approach with *Karintoya ! Karintoya !*

A FLUTE PLAYER.

A conservatism which is remarkable only for its slavish obedience to established custom is an insuperable bar to progress. A stroll through "Our Neighbourhood" on any day of the week would verify this aphorism unless the wanderer happened to meet in his circumambulations with Inos'ke, the flute man. Exceptions, however, after all, prove the rule, and the contrast to the established state of things which he presents only serves to throw into stronger relief the old-fashioned prejudices of the neighbours.

To a community so dunderheaded as ours, a nose to the end of time would simply be a nose. Our grandfathers were content to consider it as such, and who are we that we should endeavour to improve upon our ancestors? It's no use to represent it as an "organ" or a nasal prominence, for we are no lovers of new-fangled words (or people either for the matter of that), and we wont believe you. That its use is to smoke tobacco through, or perhaps smell a flower occasionally, we have no objection to



concede—although there are, they say, persons to be met with who profess to regret the latter faculty, more particularly at certain seasons of the year when the farmer is at work—but that the nose, beyond such possibilities, is anything else than a ridiculous and useless appendage, we hope nobody will be so ill-advised as to contend. Go to ! ye dullards ; are ye so besotted with simplicity as to close your owls' eyes to the innovator in your midst ? If it took many centuries to produce a man wise enough to discover the excellencies of roast pig, what number of revolving ages can Inos'ke be the sum total of ? A prophet has no honour in his own country, however, and a genius is nobody in his generation; so Inos'ke is content to blow his flute, and patiently await the verdict of posterity, provided always that he does a little trade in musical instruments and keeps the rice pot tolerably full. Magnanimous Inos'ke ! It may be urged by such as have not seen Inos'ke that, after all, playing on the flute is no new discovery and is therefore undeserving of any special laudation. Out upon ye, mockers and scoffers !—how play ye your flutes ? With the lips, ye'll say. Aye, aye, my good friends, but Inos'ke, breaking such conventional bonds, PLAYS HIS WITH HIS NOSE ! Yes : he has at last discovered the special use of the nasal prominence, so long regarded as but an useless and inconvenient elevation. Among the many and manifest advantages of this method of using the nose may be enumerated :—1, that it

finds employment for an idle feature ; 2, that it gives a remarkable and entertaining appearance to the performer ; and 3, that it leaves disengaged for other purposes that useful orifice the mouth. To verify this latter assertion Inos'ke should be seen by everybody. How much drollery would be lost to "Our Neighbourhood" were he obliged to use his mouth, whilst under his present system he is at liberty to loll out his tongue or stick it in his cheek; to purse up his mouth, and even to shout a word or two without interrupting the flow of his melody; and with a little more practice who knows but that he may find it possible to sing a stave whilst playing the accompaniment a little higher up: thereby demonstrating the practicability of doing two things at the same time, and giving the lie likewise to one of those sayings which the world insists on persons accepting without producing any proofs in support thereof. By such humble instruments are great discoveries sometimes made !

CONCERNING ANTS.

By such as suffering from an invasion of ants—a circumstance by no means uncommon at certain seasons of the year—and who, whilst anxious to rid their habitations of the plague are yet restrained by feelings of humanity from slaughtering the advancing column—will be hailed with satisfaction the publication of a method in vogue in “Our Neighbourhood,” whereby this object is attained without the sacrifice of a single insect, and the superiority of diplomacy to brute force at the same time satisfactorily demonstrated. The process is a simple and inexpensive one, and was heretofore to be learned for a trifle from our priest, as also from the *Yabu isha*, a title which rendered into unpliant English, admits of one translation only, namely, quack-doctor. To unbelieving persons a recipe from such a quarter as the latter of these two sources might be received with suspicion, but such a possibility is out of the question in the case of the venerable priest,

whose well-shaven pate, on which the sun glistens when he goes abroad till he seems to have a little “glory” round his head, and whose orderly garments, smelling of incense, could hardly be supposed to belong to any one whose veracity admitted of so much as a sniff or a toss of the head. That a secret of such momentous interest to the whole human family, however, should be hidden in the bosom of a few, is against the spirit of an age at war with monopolists, and for that reason partly, but chiefly owing to benevolent promptings on the part of the priest aforesaid, the process in question is hereby declared without promise of future fee or reward. This act of generosity is the more particularly set forth, lest any reader, having overheard the Barber’s wife’s profane remark, should be influenced thereby. It is sad to think that owing to an infirmity of temper from which the good soul suffers, she should find it so difficult to abstain from invective—an accomplishment in which she is curiously proficient—that even of her husband’s favourite customer she permits herself to speak with disrespect. “And a mighty fine piece of generosity, too, to give away what cost him nothing and brings him in no income,” it is averred she remarked in her most snappish tones. No wonder that the little Barber’s face grew red with indignation to hear such a speech,—though, to believe his wife, his florid colour had another origin,—as if a man cannot spend an evening with a friend and that friend a



AN ANI

priest, without having imputations cast upon his sobriety! A discriminating public, however, to whom such contemptible jealousies are unknown, is confidently appealed to in the full assurance that the boon presented for their acceptance will be received without scepticism, and a record of the results is earnestly requested to be deposited at the *saké* shop, addressed to the *nanushi* of "Our Neighbourhood," prepaid. To a string of ants advancing in serried column an obstacle placed to retard their march is as nothing, but a piece of fair white paper inscribed with "*ichi nin maye jiu roku mon*," and pasted on their pathway is quite another matter. To wholesale slaughter they are indifferent, but a demand such as the above is more than an ant of even average intelligence could be supposed to entertain for a moment. That an insect of such thrift and industry should be willing to pay down sixteen cash for the doubtful advantage of walking over a piece of paper is ridiculous. Not but that there may be here and there amongst the crowd an ant or two of careless habits, and ready with his money, but "*from each man sixteen cash*" is so staggering a requirement, that, as may readily be conjectured, a further advance under such conditions becomes impossible. Confusion in the van, a warning along the line, a general panic and a precipitate retreat, are the results to be expected by such as put their faith in this recipe from "Our Neighbourhood." Nor let such as may be unsuccessful in its

application so much as hint that aught but some flaw in its preparation is the cause of failure. Mayhap the paper is not of proper quality, or the writing on it difficult to be deciphered.

THE BELLS.

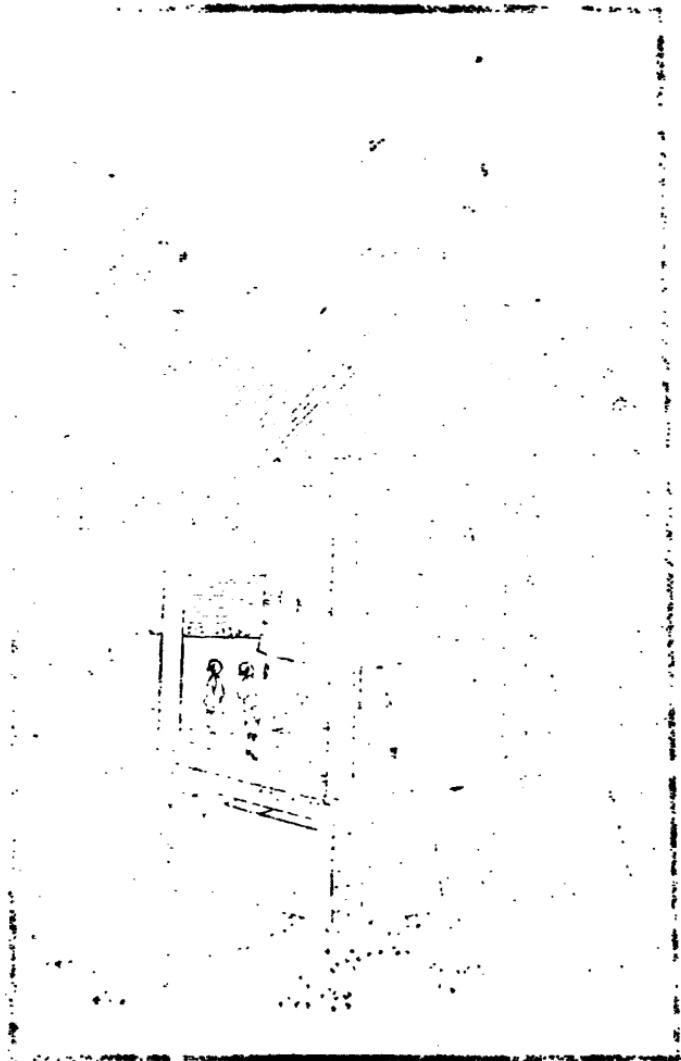
There is commotion and distress in “Our Neighbourhood;” grief not unmingled with despair. Old neighbours shake their heads, and sigh, and say that “Times are changed, indeed; things are not as they were.” And the youngsters, old-fashioned before their time by reason of their need to work for their daily food from tender years, imitate their seniors and look grave. An old friend is gone: the Great Bell of Shiba is no more! As the polestar to the mariner, so was the Bell of Shiba to the simple-minded neighbours. For twice a hundred revolving years it’s glorious monody was heard, telling to the farmer, by the clear or muffled tone of its vibrations, a coming change of weather. To the old folks, listening to its peal from early infancy to green old age, its familiar voice spoke hopefully in youth, encouragingly at man’s estate, solemnly in life’s decline. And now—it will never more be heard! Its voice is silenced for ever. Its last expiring

note was throbbed out on the chill night air of new year's eve, when the roaring flames which swallowed up the temple beside which it had hung for so many years extended their fatal embrace to the structure which surrounded it, and temple and bell, so long associated, perished together.

Two hundred and two years ago the third Shogun, Iyemitsuko, superintended the casting of this bell, and presented it to the temple of Zojōji. A princely gift ! It is said that of a still summer's night, as its golden notes rolled forth, the country round for incredible distances was flooded with the melody. Nay, that the Daimio of Odawarra in his castle could hear on such occasions the mellow music, now swelling and now falling, as wave piled on wave, crested, rolled onward, and was broken.

Alas ! for the grand old bell. Its deep toned vibrations will never again diffuse themselves in eddying circles at dead of night across the slumbering city. Some vulgar clock will henceforth proclaim the time of day with hideous regularity. No more little by-ringings at off-times and festivals, but two o'clock will follow one o'clock with punctuality, and the pleasant element of uncertainty will be eliminated for ever.

As might have been expected, the last moments of the bell were a mixture of the sublime and pathetic. Aroused by the cry of fire, the aged custodian, emerging from the box in which he slept beside the



THE GREAT BELL OF SHIBA.

bell he loved so well, was seen to take his place, and ring the double stroke which betokens alarm—unwonted accents for the bell, which hitherto required that each series of vibrations of its solemn monotone should die away before it spoke again. It seemed now, however, as if danger made its pulse beat quicker. Its voice was clear as ever, but its utterance more rapid. How sublime it seemed as it tolled its own knell amidst the crackle and crash and roar of the fire !

But the air grows thicker. It is hard to breathe, as the flames, leaping forth from the main building, are seen to lick the belfry with their forked and gleaming tongues. In the old bell-ringer's face, lit up by the fire, agony and despair are plainly written. Yet, though scorched and half stifled, he will not quit his post. What is life to him without his bell? And so, regardless of all around him, he continues to toll. But now another portent makes itself apparent, for a dull red glow is seen to steal over one side of the ponderous metal ; the dragon on its summit, in which, it is said, the spirit of the bell resides, grows white with heat, and the crackling of the burning timbers betokens that the end is at hand. Already under the influence of the heat the note is changing from a pœan to a moan. The ring by which the bell is hung grows hot—is melting—a moment more and the glorious old relic, its last utterance strangled in its birth like a stifled sob, has fallen! A shower of sparks flies heavenwards, and,

save for the fire, there is silence, and the temple of Zojōji and its great bell are amongst the things which were.

* * * * *

In old times the casting of a bell was a great event, and performed with much ceremony. It was by no means uncommon for ladies of quality to present the mirrors which reflected their charms, to be melted down and incorporated with the bell, in the expectation that every time it was tolled, it would offer up, in the sweetest of tones, a little prayer that the donors be forgiven their frailties and follies. What prettier conceit was ever cherished? The sweet chime of the bell at eventide, wafted on the wings of the wind to the gods, bespeaking their favour for the little fair ones here below,—innocentest of sinners!

A bell used to be a very holy object. So sacred was it, that a man passing beneath it was said to be turned to water, and a woman to a serpent. It was considered a deadly insult to the spirit of the bell. This spirit resided in the Dragon *couchant* which crouched upon the top and served the purpose of affording a means by which to suspend the bell. And a most plaguey spirit, by all accounts, was this same Dragon. For not content with avenging himself as aforesaid, he, it seems, being related to another reptile of the same order who inhabited a castle beneath the water, was always on the watch for an opportunity to rejoin his relative below, to

the imminent danger, nay, sometimes to the complete destruction, of the bell. For is it not history how that a great bell of Mito's was being landed near Asakusa from a boat upon the river, and how that as fast as it could be applied, the landing tackle broke, but never an inch stirred the bell? Pondering on this unexpected state of affairs, it became evident to him that nothing but the strongest material could resist the strain necessary to overcome the passive resistance of the bell; so Mito procured a rope of women's hair, and set to work confident of success, for what could prove immovable to such an appeal? But the first pull altogether blasted his hopes; the rope snapped like thread, and the bell fell into the mud,—to the disappointment of the priests, be it said, who declared that they saw the cause of failure from the first, inasmuch as they perceived two river imps in the form of children emerge from the water, and cut the ropes as fast as they were applied. However that may have been, the common people although they saw nothing supernatural, believed the holy fathers, and left to its fate the bell, which, sinking into the river, disappeared for ever. And so a great bell was sacrificed because the little Dragon on top was determined to see his cousin of the castle in the river. And the place where this befell is called unto the present day Kanegafuji. And the difficulties of water transport are well known and dreaded by all owners or custodians of bells in Japan from that day. Near Nagasaki is another place where a

similar accident is said to have happened, and it is called in consequence Kanesaski.

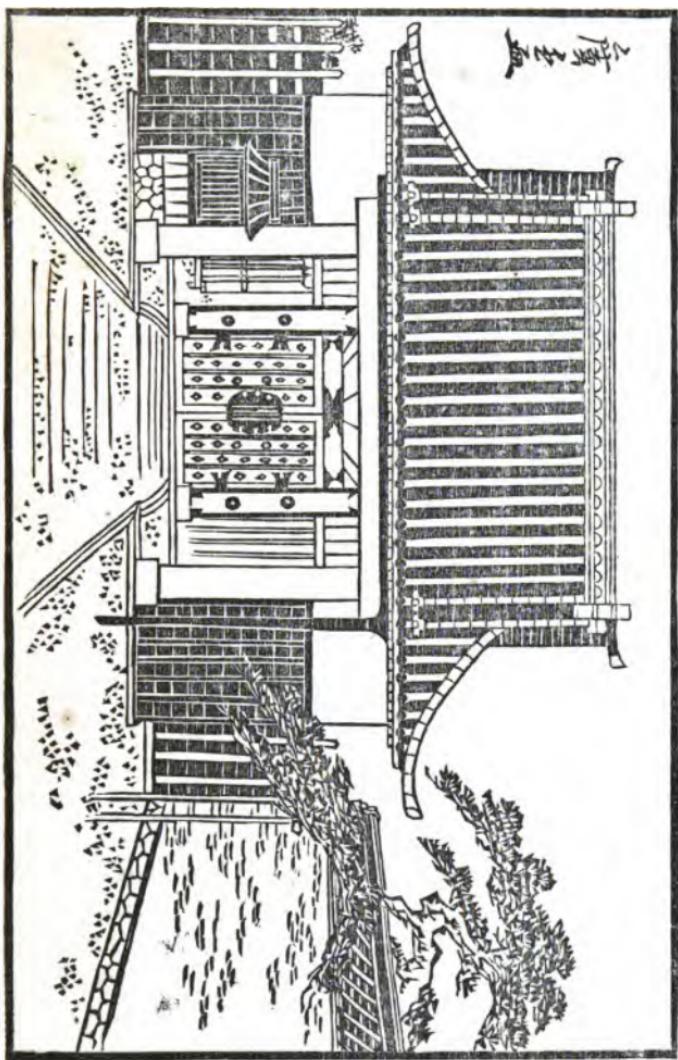
The great Bell of Miidera is remarkable in many ways. A spot upon it is shown where there is a little hollow in the metal. A celebrated beauty, it is said, struck with admiration of its polish, laid her hand upon the bell and prayed aloud for just such a mirror to reflect her dimples; when, lo! the bell, as if outraged by the speech, withdrew from her touch and left a hollow where before was roundness. Could it have been that the melting pot received no little contribution from her, and the guardian spirit was out of temper in consequence? For the credit of a bell of such renown it is to be hoped that the converse at least was not the case, as a bell capable of such rank ingratitude could hardly be trusted with these little prayers which the fair benefactresses, as related above, expected it to say for them. However, whatever its faults, inconstancy was not one of them, for when Benkei, a man renowned for his prodigious strength, carried off the bell from Miidera to his own place, it fell into a state of profound melancholy, and longed so after its former residence that it had only one burden to its song. Let it be rung never so often, it could only sob out from early morn till dewy eve—*Miidera ye ikō, Miidera ye ikō*—“I want to go back to Miidera, I want to go back to Miidera”—until at last Benkei, maddened by its reiteration of this complaint, shouldered it once more, and carrying it to the top of the hill, flung it down in disgust,

since which time it has, it is said, completely changed its tune and become a reasonable bell once more.*

* On New Year's eve 1874, one of the oldest and most celebrated temples in Yedo that of Zojoji, in Shiba (the ancient burying place of the Tycoons), either by accident or design, was destroyed by fire. By some, it is said, that the accidental overturning of a lamp originated the conflagration, by others that a Buddhist priest maddened by the knowledge that on the morrow the splendid relic of his religion, in accordance with an edict, lately published, was to be transferred to the Sintoo sect, deliberately set fire to the building. However that may be, few who were present at the fire can ever forget the grandeur of the scene, where the noble old pile backed by a grove of dark cryptomeria trees, blazing with exceeding fierceness, illuminated the city for miles round, the roar of the fire being audible for an incredible distance, whilst the showers of sparks belched forth, mingling with the snow-flakes then falling produced a pyrotechnic effect never probably before witnessed. During all the time, notwithstanding that the heat was intense, the great bell (one of the three celebrated bells of Japan) was steadily tolled, adding an indescribable solemnity to the scene, until, becoming red-hot, the ring by which it was suspended gave way. The alteration in its note at this time was very remarkable.

THE OLD GATE.

In a green and quiet roadway in the outskirts of "Our Neighbourhood" may be seen an ancient gateway; a massive and old-fashioned structure whose ponderous beams have bravely resisted the attacks of time, though seamed and marked and scarred, it is true, in the unequal conflict. Nor are its surroundings out of keeping with the building, for the roadway, once so trim and neat, now deserted and disused, is out of repair and neglected. Tall weeds and rank grasses flourish undisturbed where once was order, contending even with the narrow track saved from their encroachments by the feet of an occasional pack horse or farm labourer. The very drain, though built of heavy masonry, is choked with greenery, and between the moss-grown stones of the building's basement creeping plants and vigorous ferns have taken root and thriven. On the opposite side a row of towering *sugi* trees confers a gloomy shade upon the road and bears witness, if witness were wanted, to the antiquity of the place.



A GATEWAY.

For originally, a boundary hedge dividing off the cultivated ground, succeeding years have seen the shadows of the saplings stealing inch by inch across the road, till now the western sun perforce must take them with him when he would fain visit the old roof, and the chill winds of autumn, sweeping through their gnarled branches, deposit fragrant pine needles upon the tiles and in the metal gutters. Not that the general appearance of the pile has suffered much from the effects of time. For what if here and there a patch of plaster has fallen off, or a tile or two dropped from the moss-encrusted roof so quaintly picturesque with its turned-up sides and angles looking like a canopy—(the Japanese, 'tis said, have taken a tent as their architectural model)—such like alterations harmonize with the surroundings, toning down the early outlines, and mellowing the ancient masterpiece as only time can do. Beside the gate a knotted *matsz* tree stretches its lean old body across the wall, here curved to form an open space in front. Its head bowed with age, and long skinny arm leaning for support upon a cross-handled crutch, are strangely suggestive of a feeble dame, who seeks to climb over the boundary but is restrained by age and infirmity. And when the wind blows she seems to nod her head and say, "Aye! aye! I'm old and feeble now, and no one cares about me or trims my branches or pulls out my dead leaves; but, for all that, time was when a comelier tree could not be found in all the district round."

What rare sights I've seen, too, in the good old days when I was young! My lord's *norimon* with its brave following of horse and footmen, his fiery charger led behind the litter, and *hasamibako* (or boxes of valuables) bringing up the rear. Or, mayhap, it is my lord's funeral that rises up before me, or crowds of dainty little maids tripping in and out, not to mention a tragedy or two played out beneath my branches. Ah! I could tell a deal if I only had somebody to listen to me, for of course one cannot associate with the vulgar *sugi* trees over the way, and the gate is too solid and sombre for my old gossip." Doubtless many a thrilling chapter could be written were it possible to extract her secrets from the ancient tree.

The open space before the entrance, formed, as has been mentioned, by the incurving of the flanking walls, is covered by round water-worn stones, excepting in the centre, where a smooth pavement leads to the great gates. These massive gates, made of enduring *kiaki* wood, are of great weight and thickness, and were originally ornamented with bronze tracings and studded with huge nails. Though most of these decorations have been stripped off, the wood underneath them, being of a different colour from the remainder, distinctly shows their pattern. Upon the gigantic beam above the gates still hangs the circular plate, whereon the family's crest, now, alas! effaced by time or by design, was once displayed.

Beside the grand entrance may be seen a smaller gate for the use of servants and retainers and leading to the guard's house. A projecting window, strongly barred and having heavy shutters pierced with many a peep-hole to survey suspicious-looking strangers through, commands this entrance. In the good old times when the hand of every man was familiar with the sword hilt, it behoved a chieftain to be upon his guard against surprise, and hence it happened that none might enter or pass out without declaring who and what they were. Within this gate still stand, in full view of the intruder, three weapons of strange make and great length. By means of these a brawler importing his sword into the parley was speedily disarmed. A grappling iron upon a stout lance shaft, some eight feet long, entangled deftly in his loose garments whilst retaining him a prisoner, permitted of his assailant's keeping out of range of his two-handed sword, and gave time for a second guard to thrust between his legs a T-shaped weapon, studded with sharp spikes, whilst a third pinned him to the ground when so tripped up, by means of a two-pronged instrument designed to fit his neck. Should any further trouble upon the part of the prisoner be experienced, three heavy quarter-staves in the rack, beside the other weapons, would seem to show that the resources of the guards are not yet exhausted. Unhappy, indeed, the struggling wretch whose body was belaboured with such heavy staves! Within the guardhouse, be-

grimed by wood-smoke, the sword rack still clings to the wall, and by its side a proclamation board, with, underneath the latter, rows of hooks upon which the wooden passes of retainers, handed to the *momban* as they passed out, were wont to be hung. An old *hibachi* still is there, round which, for aught one knows, the shades of ancient guards may still be squatted, warming their wrinkled hands over ghostly charcoal, and smoking shadowy pipes with faces as placid as when yet alive.

On each pillar of the door frame, numbers of wooden tablets hang. Twice sixty all told. These *fuda*, (each inscribed with a verse from the Buddhist Bible,) one of which was purchased yearly from the priest and hung up outside the gate, show by their number that no architect of yesterday designed the building. Of the castle itself naught remains. A look-out tower is the only building which exists, from which, at dead of night, the watchman, scanning the horizon for indications of fire, looked down no doubt upon a lordly building whose slumbering inmates he has long since rejoined in shadow-land. The castle gardens, however, show traces of their ancient beauty, for ornamental lakes, with here and there a quaint stone bridge, a climbing *fudi* or a group of cherry trees, may yet be seen. Foundations of the *nagayxs*, or retainers' barracks, are also evident. But saving and excepting the ancient gateway, Time has trampled into dust every record of his progress.

THE GRAVEYARD.

The traveller journeying westward through “Our Neighbourhood,” as he leaves the Main Street of the village behind and reaches the open country, will observe upon his left hand a pathway winding through the cultivated uplands—past fields of rustling barley—between tall hedgerows of Indian corn—along patches of flowering cotton,—by vegetable gardens, and under ropes of straw stretched between bamboo poles, and bearing scraps of tin, or bits of glass attached, the musical tinkle of which when agitated by the breeze is meant to warn from off the crops, in the gentlest of tones, the forward sparrow and the depredating rook. Beyond this cultivated ground, the pathway, plunging through a grove of dark pines and feathery bamboos, emerges in a graveyard that lies at the extremity of the mountain spur on which our village stands. Here, sheltered from the bleak north wind, and kissed by southern breezes, nestles—at least so says the legend inscribed:

upon the large stone that fronts the intruder as he enters by the pathway just described—"the burial place of the Imai family from generation to generation." From the man who first "parted the grass," as he set his foot upon the field, thro' ages of tillers of the ground until the present date, when the requirements of a great city, swallowing up plot and field as its suburbs extended, has absorbed amongst its population the quondam husbandman, who by force of circumstances, compelled to abandon his old occupation has turned his talents or opportunities to account in other pursuits—to the present head of the family, the *saké* merchant, and mayor of Our Village, the bones of every branch of Imai have found their resting place here. In the early morn when the sun's bright eye, peeping over the crest of the mountains opposite looks across a slumbering world, his earliest glance lights upon this spot, and the dew drops glistening in his light, smile back a gladsome recognition, while yet the blue mist floats suspended in the valley beneath, and the spiders' webs look white and solid from the moisture entangled in their meshes. And when the sun has climbed the hills, and the shadows shorten, and the mist has cleared away, and the sound of children's voices, and the shout of the husbandman at work, and the carol of the lark are heard the graveyard looks its best and brightest. The fresh pure air of morning and the sounds of life about are just as when the sleepers knew them last, ere they closed their eyes.



THE GRAVEYARD.

in death. These silent ones have never left their homes; they sleep amongst their friends. What are death's terrors to such as they were? No dismal hearse, no nodding plumes, no cold and ghostly tomb distort their fancy, but when their turn comes to rest, they're laid to sleep where they lived and laboured as a child is wrapped in its mother's cloak and laid down beside her while she does her work a-field.

When the shadows lengthen out again, and the sun is sinking in the West his last lingering look ere he disappears seems to rest upon the old graveyard. At that twilight hour, when the evening breeze laden with the scent of lilies sighs through the pine trees, and the delicate bamboos bow their graceful heads and whisper and the spot seems peopled with the gentle spirits of the dead a sweet melancholy pervades the place: a melancholy which is deepened beyond expression when the pale moon flooding with silvery light the quiet spot distorts the outlines of grave and tree into weird and ghostlike forms, and, save for the noiseless bat, or now and then the tinkle of the priest's bell rising from the valley below, all nature seems wrapped in profound repose.

The headstones of the graveyard do not differ much in shape. They consist for the most part of four-sided blocks set upright upon square bases, and either bear inscriptions only, on their faces or are ornamented with figures of Jizo Sama, an effigy

having a glory round his head, and carrying in his left hand a bell and in his right a representation of an iron rod, called *Shakujo*, strung with rings on the top. These last—alas! how numerous!—betoken children's graves, beside which many time a sorrowing mother may be seen in silent prayer.

The inscriptions on the stones do not record the names by which the dead were known in life, but tell instead the date of death, and the *Kaimiō* or Buddhistic title which is conferred by the priest on every true believer after death. These titles are in many instances very fanciful and generally highly poetical. In that group of three, for instance, near the bank where grow the ferns, the stones having been recently erected are easily read. The group consists of two parents and their child; the father is described as a “believer in the dream tomb”—the mother as “one remarkable for wifely virtues”—the infant as “a young child of the law.” And again, a girl is described as “a child of promise born but to die” (lit. “the young girl who was born in vain and fell into the grave.”) Another yet is called “the true believer” (lit. “the purple cloud and strains of music-believing woman.”) True Buddhists believe that those who live in sanctity hear strains of heavenly music and see purple clouds of glory when dying.)

The pediments upon which the headstones stand have each a little basin hollowed out in their front, (intended to hold water for the spirit's drinking).

and on either side of this a hole in which to stand a bamboo joint containing sprigs of evergreen called *Shikimi*. These sprigs are frequently renewed by mourning survivors, and sometimes flowers in season are substituted for them. A fresh mound having by the side thereof a tall lath (inscribed with Chinese and Sanskrit characters), and a tea-cup on the top, betokens that death has lately been at work amongst the Imai. These laths or *tobâ* are furnished by the priest, and a fresh one is supplied every seven days, until the forty-ninth when eight *tobâ* may be seen surrounding the grave. The tea-cup contains water, as being the purest offering which can be made, and is daily re-filled. When the number of *tobâ* is completed, this part of the ceremonial is finished and the next step is to erect the headstone which must be placed by the hundredth day. The *tobâ* however are not taken away when this is done, but remain until removed by decay or laid prostrate by the wind. Persons of means place a small monumental tablet in their temple and another on their *butszdan*, or family altar-shelf, at home, and on the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 13th, 17th and 33rd anniversaries of the festival of *bon*, (12th day of 7th month) lights are burned before them. Each corpse interred is placed cross-legged in the coffin, and is dressed in walking costume with sandals on feet and stick in the hand, and is supplied with six cash to pay the toll at the six cross-roads which he will meet before he can pass the river which bounds the confines of Hades.

Three thousand six hundred million *ri* the poor soul is supposed to travel on his way to heaven, but as he visits this earth of ours on the 12th night of the 7th month of every year, it is difficult to conjecture when his journey ends. It is said that this is one of the Buddhist mysteries which true believers must not question. The festival just alluded to is called *bon*, and is kept by lighting fires of hemp refuse before the doors of such as have dead relatives, and hanging lighted lanterns in the windows to guide the spirits to their quondam homes and back again. Nor is it the only occasion on which they are supposed to revisit their friends; for it is a popular superstition that a butterfly out of season, or flying in an unusual place, is a spirit coming back to hover round his loved ones.

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